

Branch Chairman's message

The approach of the 1996 Annual General Meeting marks the end of another RDS year. The Branch is fortunate in having so many people willing to do so much. Here are some examples:

Many pairs of feet have trundled door to door delivering leaflets about the Cambridge - Royston line stations.

Our East-West leaflet was produced, delivered and further copies printed to meet the interest created.

Thousands of envelopes have been addressed, newsletters folded, letters received and answered, meetings held and talks given to a variety of groups.

There have been cake stalls, petitions gathered and much else.

The RDS in East Anglia has been fully committed to furthering the cause of an environmentally friendly transport system, painstakingly putting the message to politicians and media. Letters have been sent to the press, yet seldom published,

welcoming new developments, and answering ill informed anti-rail comment. The membership of the Branch is increasingly getting involved and it has been a good year - I thank you all.

But, do not think it rests here. A General Election approaches, and there are many issues that we need to address in 1996. If you can help run a fete, sell Society books or help deliver leaflets, please let me know. We need to keep monitoring the effects of rail privatisation, both good and bad. Whatever happens to the privatisation process, we need to make sure that the rail user's views are fully considered.

My thanks again to all for your hard work, especially the Branch Committee and Tony Albert for his work on Rail East.

Peter Wakefield
Branch Chairman.

NSE Card on Anglia

Following the withdrawal by Great Eastern Railway of Sunday services between Colchester and Ipswich, many people found they were unable to use their Network cards at Manningtree. There were many complaints. Congratulations to Anglia for agreeing to allow Network card holders to use their trains at Manningtree on Sundays.

More freight takes to the rails

The final few weeks of 1995 saw three trial freight services in the region. Two involved coal traffic to cement works, a welcome return of traffic that used to travel by rail. Coal to the Ketton cement works near Stamford travelled by rail from Killoch near Ayr. The second cement works is at Barrington near Cambridge, where the train is expected to take 100 lorries a week off the narrow roads around the works.

The third new service, from Harwich Container terminal, was the first train to use the new international Railport at Doncaster. The 15 wagons loaded with goods from Europe was estimated to be the equivalent of 60 lorries. The service operated by Mainline Freight and Stena Line is expected to compete with Channel Tunnel traffic. Stena is to apply to the Government for a track access grant and hopes to introduce a daily service from the port.

RDS ANNUAL SPONSORED BICYCLE RIDE

Each year Branch members undertake a bicycle ride to raise funds for RDS. Once again your support is being sought by branch members who will be taking part.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The notice of the Annual General Meeting is on the back page. We look forward to seeing you in Bury St Edmunds on Saturday 24th February.

On your bike!

Anglia Railways has been awarded a Government grant of around £75,000 to help improve the provision for cycles on its local trains. Additional money for the project is expected from Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils. The application, made to the Department of Transport Cycle Challenge, followed extensive consultation with rail user groups and local authorities on possible improvements. The Branch made a number of suggestions concerning the original concept as well as writing to the Department of Transport in sup-

port of the application.

The proposals involve modifying one section of the trains to enable 6 bicycles to be carried on a 2 car Class 150 unit and 4 bicycles on the single coach Class 153 units. The initial plans are based on systems used on the continent where the storage equipment can be converted back into seating when not being used to carry bicycles. The intention is to have a modified train in operation within a few months.

The subject of increasing bicycle capacity on trains has been a regular topic of conver-

sation between the RDS and rail managers for many years. Congratulations are, therefore, in order to Anglia Railways, the county councils and the government. It will be welcomed by many and should encourage greater use of bicycles.

One final note on this subject, the Government's press release for the award indicated that the modifications were to be made to *Class 159* units which are only operated by South West Trains. It therefore appears that Anglia Railways has also managed to acquire some new stock!

Peterborough Card introduced

One of the anomalies of the former Network SouthEast (NSE) was the location of its boundaries. Although NSE served Peterborough, the sector boundary was at Huntingdon. This resulted in local passengers to Peterborough not being able to use reduced price Network card tickets, thus making off peak fares appear expensive.

Now, West Anglia Great Northern Railway, who operate the service, have introduced the

Peterborough Card to give similar discounts for passengers travelling from St Neots and Huntingdon to that city. The card costs just £3 a year and gives a 1/3 discount on off peak fares. For some reason the card is not valid at other stations nor for tickets brought at Peterborough itself.

Despite the odd restrictions, the branch has welcomed this move to attract more people to travel by train.

Branch meeting in Cambridge

At the branch meeting held in Cambridge last November, members heard Stuart King of Cambridgeshire County Council speak about the possible solutions to transport problems in Cambridgeshire. He talked about the proposed station at Cherry Hinton as well as other possible sites for new stations. Mr King's talk was followed by

a lively discussion during which he answered many questions as well as explaining the reasons for certain decisions being taken.

The meeting also heard that future national RDS campaigns include the need for new rolling stock, railway connections at airports and the benefits of staffing stations.

St Ives study now 3 years old!

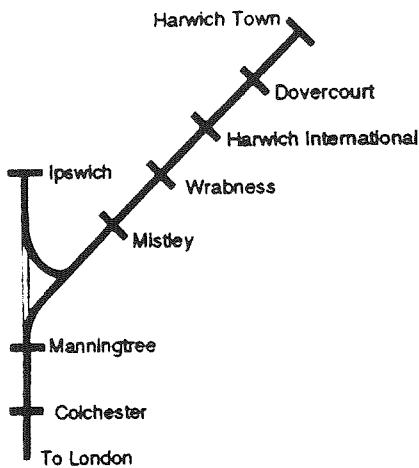
It is now three years since Cambridgeshire County Council started its study into reopening the Cambridge to St Ives line. Since that time, much work has been carried out by the County Council but a full a submission has yet to be made to the Department of Transport.

The Branch has written to Transport Secretary Sir George Young expressing its concern about the delays, noting the lack of clear criteria for rail projects and drawing attention to the fact that figures had been revised several times as a result of rail privatisation.

The Minister was also reminded of the full support given to the scheme by former Transport Minister Roger Freeman nearly 18 months ago. The scheme is unlikely to proceed unless Government money is forthcoming in the near future.

Harwich leaflet

The Branch, in conjunction with the Great Eastern Railway, has produced a leaflet promoting the Harwich line, in particular the new direct service to Ipswich. The leaflet follows a similar format to the "Meldreth Leaflet" produced last year. It sets out the advantages of train travel, timetable and fare details and suggestions for days out by train. Several thousand copies will be delivered to homes along the route during January/February, an ideal way to burn off those Christmas calories!



•Harwich International has ferry services to the Hook of Holland, Hamburg, Esbjerg and Gothenburg.

The Branch hopes to produce similar information for other stations during the year.

Local transport day

Following the successful day last year, the Norfolk Society will again be hosting a local transport day on Saturday, 2nd March 1996 at the University of East Anglia.

Invitations have been sent to rail/bus operators and user groups asking for presentations. Similar invitations have also been sent to ramblers, pedestrian and cycle groups. It is also hoped to have details of the Norfolk County Council Travel Wise programme.

Arrangements are now being finalised and full details can be obtained from Ian Shepherd on 01263 713370.

Writing to your MP

MPs are never too busy to read a letter from a constituent. If the letter is hand written and individual, as opposed to a copy of a standard letter, it will be given attention and replied to. Some government MPs prefer to pass the question to the Minister concerned, and, in due course will forward the reply. Some will write a reply themselves. In every case one letter is worth many signatures on a petition. Letters to MPs do work!

East-west report issued

As Rail East was going to press, the first stage of the consultant's report on a possible East-West rail route was issued. The report looked at a number of possible routes and concluded that the best way from Cambridge to Bedford was to use the existing Royston line with a spur at Hitchin. Trains would go up the East Coast line to Sandy and across on a new route to Bedford. The Branch has welcomed the general findings and is obtaining a full copy to enable detailed comments to be made.

Trains return to Dereham

The first section of the former Wymondham to Dereham line reopened to passengers on 23rd December. The Mid Norfolk Railway Preservation Trust hopes to reopen the entire route to Wymondham and, to help to achieve this, Bonds are being issued. For details of the Trust contact: Mr S Moye, 21 The Brambles, Ware, Herts SG12 0XU. National Secretary Trevor Garrod will be writing a full account of the reopening project in Railwatch.

Although RDS campaigns for a modern and effective railway system, revival of old lines is always good news.

Some preserved lines are able to contribute to local transport networks as well as bringing tourists to the area. It is possible that microfranchises will be operated in this way.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 24th February at 1.45pm - RDS East Anglian Branch AGM in the Library, Bury St Edmunds.

Saturday 16th March - RDS East Anglian Branch committee meeting. The committee welcomes your suggestions for the year's programme and offers of help.

Saturday 4th May - RDS National AGM in Mansfield. A buffet lunch and tea are available at £6.15, bookable in advance. Tickets from David Soames, 158 Atherstone Ave, Peterborough PE3 9UN

Saturday 8th June - RDS sponsored cycle ride.

Saturday 29th June - RDS Reopenings Conference in Bicester.

1996 Annual General Meeting

The 1996 Annual General Meeting of the East Anglian Branch of the Railway Development Society will take place on Saturday 24th February at Bury St Edmunds Library starting at 1.45pm.

Agenda

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| 1 Chairman's welcome | 9 Election of Branch Officers and committee: |
| 2 Apologies for absence | a) Chairman |
| 3 Guest speaker:
Grace Taylor,
Rail Users Consultative
Council for Eastern
England. | b) Vice-Chairman |
| 4 Questions and answers | c) Secretary |
| | d) Treasurer |
| | e) Sales Officer |
| | f) Minutes Secretary |
| | g) Membership Secretary |
| | h) Press Officer |
| | i) Other committee members |
| | 10 Appointment of Honorary Auditor |
| | 11 Motions |
| | 12 Branch President's closing comments |

Branch Annual General Meeting

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| 5 Minutes and matters arising from the 1995 AGM | 10 Appointment of Honorary Auditor |
| 6 Chairman's report | 11 Motions |
| 7 Secretary's report | 12 Branch President's closing comments |
| 8 Treasurer's report | |

The meeting will finish around 4.30pm

The Library is located on Sergents Walk between St Andrews Street North and St Johns Street and is a short walk from the railway station. The Library has a buffet which sells teas and light snacks.

Nominations for Officers and the Committee, duly proposed and seconded, must be in the hands of the Secretary by the 10th February.

Notices of Motion should be signed by the proposer and seconder and submitted to the Secretary by 10th February.

Bury St Edmunds is well worth a visit as there are many historic buildings, including the remains of a large abbey and a well restored railway station. On Saturdays, there is a thriving market which include a number of stalls selling local produce.

BRANCH OFFICERS

Chairman: Peter Wakefield
43 High Street, Oakington, CAMBRIDGE CB4 5AG
Vice Chairman: Peter Lawrence
75 Marl Pit Lane, NORWICH NR5 8XN
Secretary: Nick Dibben
24 Bure Close, ST IVES, Cambs, PE17 4FR
Treasurer: Lewis Buckingham
25 Drury Road, COLCHESTER, CO2 7UY
Membership: Clara Zilahi
31 Wimbotsham Road, DOWNHAM MARKET, PE38 9PE
Sales: Chris Milnes
25 Thetford Way, South Wootton, KINGS LYNN, PE30 3TG
Press Officer: Ken Burton
23 Abbeygate, THETFORD, Norfolk

All sides in transport debate

For the first time, 120 people representing Norfolk decision makers, businesses, and environmental groups, as well as members of the public, came together to debate in public "The future transport strategy and the economy for Norwich and Norfolk".

The debate took place on the evening of Friday, 10th November 1995, at the Friends Meeting House in Norwich and featured the following speakers: Jonathan Sisson, Norfolk and Waveney Chamber of Commerce
Amy O'Donnell, East Anglia Roads to Prosperity
Trevor Garrod, Railway Development Society
John Stewart, Alarm UK

Peter Glanville, a well known local radio broadcaster, chaired the meeting. Predictably, the business lobby supported the dualling the A47 and further road improvements to assist the economy of the county.

The opposing views from environmental interests considered more roads meant further environmental damage, business centralisation and job losses. They believe that spending should be switched from road building to alternative transport networks.

After the meeting, Jonathan Sisson suggested a private meeting early in 1996 between environmental groups and the Chamber of Commerce to explore and establish common ground on future transport policy.