

## Lowestoft celebrates 150 years

The principal celebrations were held on Saturday, 3rd May which was the actual day in 1847 when the line first opened to traffic as a single line railway. During the morning, civic dignitaries from locations served by the line arrived by train to take part in celebrations at Lowestoft station. Also in attendance were the Chairman of Waveney District Council, Andy Cooper, Managing Director of Anglia Railways and the Editor of the Lowestoft Journal. Music was provided by two local youth bands. Prizes were presented to the winners of competitions. A platform seat, cycle stands, a local welcoming board and a specially commissioned painting by a local artist depicting various aspects of the line's history were unveiled. The invited guests were then entertained to lunch in the nearby Royal Norfolk and Suffolk Yacht Club. In the evening similar facilities were unveiled at a short ceremony held at Oulton Broad North Station.

Other events held included lectures in Lowestoft Central Library by Dr Richard Joby and Adrian Vaughan, an exhibition of local railway memorabilia and photographs at the same location. The exhibition will transfer to the East Point Pavilion on Lowestoft seafront in June and to Somerleyton Hall during the second half of August. There was also a

treasure trail for adults and children involving 65 local shops.

On 10th May, an indoor Railday event, opened by Paul Evans, the international marathon runner, was held at St Mark's Church Hall in Oulton Broad. The main attraction was a model railway layout, built specially for the celebrations by the Lowestoft Model Railway Club, depicting Oulton Broad in the 1950s. Other stand holders included RDS and ESTA. Two vintage buses from the East Anglian Transport Museum at Carlton Colville provided a free bus service throughout the day, linking the three stations in the town, the Railday event and the Transport Museum. On the same day the preserved Hastings DEMU arrived at Lowestoft on a special tour from Hastings. For the benefit of local people, it then went on to Yarmouth via Reedham with a stop at Berney Arms. Just over 100 people took advantage of the first through Lowestoft to Yarmouth passenger train for 27 years.

The celebrations ended with a very well-attended film and slide show on May 12th. The overall success of the celebrations was due in no small way to the considerable assistance received from Anglia Railways, in particular from Peter Meades, Waveney District Council and other local organisations.

## Your ideas needed!

A motion passed at our Branch AGM called for an examination of the ways in which the Branch operates and to encourage greater membership participation. Two possible ways were suggested:-

(1) Split the Branch into East and West divisions in a similar way to some other RDS branches. The key questions are (a) the line of the split and (b) whether the Branch has sufficient resources for a split.

(2) Set up specialist groups for the various parts of our campaign work. To some extent the Branch already operates in this way, but the idea would formalise the arrangement, give the groups more freedom to act and enable more members to join in. Issues to be addressed are (a) how many groups and (b) what their remit should be.

What size and role would the Branch Committee have? At present, the Branch Committee comprises 17 members and meets 4 times a year.

Some members have already given their views on the subject, but there needs to be a much wider response from members. Please send your comments to Branch Secretary, Nick Dibben.

This subject will be debated at our Colchester meeting. It is hoped, after further discussions at our September and November meetings, to be able to bring a motion forward at the next AGM.

## Station upgradings

Work is due to start this summer on major refurbishment work at three stations in the region. The Grade II listed station building at Braintree is to have its frontage restored and a new bus interchange provided in a £500,000 scheme.

At Cambridge a similar sum is being spent on restoration and renovation work including landscaping and repairs to the approach road.

Colchester Station will benefit from a £1.2m general refurbishment to the station platforms, canopies and heating systems.

Elsewhere GNER are keen to improve the facilities at Peterborough station.

## New MPs need your letters!

The general election has not only given us a change of Government but a large number of new MPs in the region. Transport matters played little or no part in the campaign, so most MPs will not be aware of local and regional rail issues. Now is the time to educate them. Suitable subjects would be the proposed East-West rail link (the second stage report is due shortly) and the effect that 44t lorries would have on Railfreight. Here is a list of the new MPs in the area. Of course, existing MPs still need to be written to!

Alan Hurst (Lab) - Braintree  
David Ruffley (Con) - Bury St Edmunds.  
Andrew Lansley (Con) - Cambridgeshire South  
Bob Russell (Lib Dem) - Colchester  
Tony Wright (Lab) - Great Yarmouth  
Ivan Henderson (Lab) - Harwich  
Kieth Simpson (Con) - Mid Norfolk  
David Prior (Con) - Norfolk North  
George Turner (Lab) - Norfolk North West  
Ian Gibson (Lab) - Norwich North  
Charles Clarke (Lab) - Norwich South  
Helen Brinton (Lab) - Peterborough

## Railtrack's 10 year plan

Railtrack's 1997 Network Management Statement issued earlier this year, outlines the company's investment and maintenance plans for the next 10 years. Around £5.6 billion is due to be spent on maintenance, £8.2 billion on renewing track, signalling and stations and £760 million on enhancing the network. This last figure will grow once the plans of the new train operators are known and could include new stations, electrification and upgrading track for higher speeds.

Many of the schemes for this region were detailed by Michael Holden, Director of Railtrack East Anglia at our Branch AGM in February. These include Thameslink 2000, completion of the Great Eastern resignalling scheme, resignalling of the

West Anglia route from Liverpool St to Cambridge, secure radio communications for drivers on Great Eastern and a new Post Office terminal at Peterborough. Railtrack are also to investigate ways of renewing the signalling on secondary routes with the aim of replacing all Absolute Block signalling on lines such as Peterborough to Norwich by 2010. On the freight side, Railtrack have announced plans to upgrade the Felixstowe line to allow more frequent and longer container trains to the docks.

## Rail East

The next edition of Rail East will be published in September. Contributions to Nick Dibben by mid August please.

## 1997 Branch AGM

Over forty members attended our Branch AGM in Bury St Edmunds last February. Our guest speaker was Micheal Holden, Director of East Anglia Railtrack, who gave an upbeat address on the company's future plans (see this page) and the role it played in the new railway organisation. He also explained how the operators (or Railtrack) were "fined" when trains failed to run to time.

Peter Lawrence is the new Branch Chairman. Outgoing Chairman, Peter Wakefield, was warmly thanked for his contribution to the Branch over the years and was presented with a book token as a sign of appreciation. Joyce Birkby has joined the committee and will help Clara prepare the minutes of meetings.

## Our campaign gets the thumbs up!

The publication of the second consultant's report for the East-West Rail Consortium has put the cost between £98 million and £172 million and suggested a completion date of 2003. This is for the construction of 10 miles of new line and the

upgrading and refurbishing of disused and freight only routes.

This route will bring benefits to the economy and to the environment. It is hoped that the new government will be more positive than the previous one in supporting rail projects.

## RUCC meeting in Southend

*This is a personal view from an observer.*

The Rail Users Consultative Committee for Eastern England meets 4 times a year at various locations, most recently in Southend. Members of the public may attend. The bulk of the meeting is taken up with the train operators giving information to the committee, members of the committee questioning and raising matters of concern.

Railtrack, LTS, Great Eastern, Anglia, WAGN, Central Trains and GNER normally are present. The last two were not present at Southend.

Railtrack's Michael Holden covered much the same ground as at our AGM but added more about the GE signalling project. All the operators were very upbeat. Anglia's Andy Cooper hinted at a new marketing strategy to attract business users. Bob Breakwell of GE, that, with the completion of the resignalling between Liverpool Street and Colchester, there would be an acceleration of both Anglia and GE trains in the autumn.

The RUCCs report to CRUCC which in turn reports to Secretary of State for Transport.

## RDS AGM

The Society's Annual General Meeting was held in Norwich at the beginning of May. Branch members assisted in the setting up and the manning of stalls and in other ways. The Lord Mayor of Norwich welcomed the members to the City and extolled its virtues. He also spoke of his belief in the role of public transport and, in particular, of railways. He was presented with a copy of the newly published book to celebrate the 150 years of the Lowestoft line.

Lord Berkeley, Chairman of the Rail Freight Group and the Piggyback Consortium, gave a fascinating and amusing talk about the problems and successes of using the railway for freight. There was a feeling that the new government might be more positive towards railways but, he emphasised, it is necessary to lobby Members of Parliament to make sure that the opportunity for a more positive policy is not wasted. He also suggested one way to level the playing field was to enforce the regulations for road transport.

## Bus connections

Improvements in train/bus integration are being introduced in a number of areas. On Great Eastern, through ticketing is available from Maldon. In Cambridge through rail/bus ticketing to the City centre is being introduced on WAGN services. Most Anglia tickets can be used between the stations at Ipswich, Norwich and Great Yarmouth and the respective town centres using most bus services.

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**Saturday 28th June - RDS National Conference on Reopenings** in Halifax. Cost £9 including buffet lunch. Bookings to David Soames, 158 Atherstone Ave, Peterborough PE3 9UN.

**Saturday 5th July - Branch meeting in Colchester** at the Buntings Rooms, off St Johns Street (behind the Playhouse), starting at 2pm. Guest speaker will be Bob Breakwell, Director of Great Eastern Railway.

**26th July - RDS National Draw** - Tickets were sent out with the last Railwatch. Please try to sell as many as you can. Proceeds will go to our Better Rail Campaign.

**Saturday 20th September - Branch meeting in Norwich** at 2pm. We are back in the Assembly House with a speaker from the Sheringham Line Partnership.

**Saturday 27th September - National Conference of Rail Users in London**

**Saturday 29th November - Branch meeting in Cambridge.**

## Ron Callaby

A second motion passed at the Branch Annual General Meeting was for the Branch to support plans to commemorate the work of Ron Callaby, who died in 1991, by funding some improvement at Watlington Station. The station, on the Kings Lynn line, is one which Ron played a key role in the reopening campaign during the 1970s.

On 26th May, 17 people and one dog met at Watlington station to commemorate Ron Callaby who worked hard to get it re-opened. A significant milestone was reached with the start of the summer timetable when an hourly service to the station was introduced. The event was also intended to draw attention to this. Four people had taken part in a sponsored cycle ride to raise money for a fitting memorial. Other people represented the Callaby family, Railway Development Society, West Anglia Great Northern, Fen Line Users Association, local residents and the press.

If you would like learn more about the details of this campaign or would like to make a donation, please contact Clara Zilahi at 31 Wimbotsham Road, Downham Market, Norfolk PE38 9PE.

## Addenbrookes Station moves forward

Plans to build a new station south of Cambridge to serve Addenbrookes Hospital moved a step closer when a survey carried out by Cambridgeshire County Council showed that 95% of those who took part were in favour of the station. Many of those who responded also mentioned the reopening of the Cambridge to St Ives line as the next logical step. A user study carried out at the same time indicated that over 1000 passengers per day would use the station within 3 years of its opening.

## Timetable changes

The new summer timetable introduced in June has improvements on many lines. West Anglia Great Northern have reduced journey times on the Peterborough and Kings Lynn routes due to the introduction of the Class 365 trains. As noted above, all stations on Fen line will have an hourly service.

Great Eastern have reintroduced Sunday services to Harwich and Ipswich on a two year trial basis. There is an additional peak hour service between Norwich and London from Anglia along with the start of the Colchester-Stansted Air-

The station has been costed at £2.2m and would comprise two 8-car platforms with shelters and a linking foot bridge. Full access would be provided for disabled users along with a shuttle bus to the hospital complex. The only long term parking provision would be for "orange badge" holders.

The next steps in the reopening process are to obtain planning consent and to submit the scheme for Government funding as part of the County Council's Transport Package bid.

port service. Anglia trains to Harwich are revised to suit the introduction of the high speed boat service. The cross-country service will now run to Cambridge to cater for the growing day trip market.

Central Trains cross-country services are revised to provide one direct Norwich-Birmingham and a Cambridge-Liverpool service each day. From Norwich there is an additional evening departure and the late afternoon train now runs to Cambridge.

On the negative side, GNER trains will no longer call at Huntingdon. There had been one train per day in each direction, which despite no publicity, was used and valued by passengers who found it inconvenient to change trains at Peterborough. The branch has written to GNER about this and our views have been reported in the local media.

### BRANCH OFFICERS

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