

Branch Meeting: Change of Venue

Just to remind you that our next meeting on **Saturday December 4th** will be in the Friends Meeting House in **Bury St. Edmunds.**, as the flyer details. Normally we meet in Cambridge at this time of the year but, owing to the very kind offer by Little St Mary's Church in Cambridge to hold our February AGM in their brand new church rooms, we decided to switch venues. As it happens the church building work has slipped behind schedule, so the AGM will now be in the Central Library, right in the centre of Cambridge. But that's really another story. Meanwhile it is Bury St Edmunds on 4 December.

Seats to come - Preview at Derby

Courtesy of photographer, Jeremy Caldecoat, this is the interior of a Standard Class car of the new Cl.379 rolling stock as displayed for the press at Derby a few weeks back. Thirty of these trains are due to take to the rails of the Liverpool St-Stansted-Cambridge and Kings Lynn route during 2011. If you want to see rather more and have access to a computer, there's a video to view at: www.cambridge-new.co.uk/home/video/video-new-high-speed-Cambridge-to-London-trains-unveiled.htm I think you'll agree, it does look much more inviting than the current trains operating this route, and unsurprisingly, mirror the similar highly attractive rolling stock which has been running south of the Thames for some time.



Network Rail is busy upgrading power supplies to cope with these rather heavier trains and their passenger-friendly air-conditioning system. This will be first time for many years that

the best rolling stock on this Liverpool St. route will be of higher quality than the best on the line from Kings Cross to Cambridge and Kings Lynn. All this will be paid for in part, of course, by increased ticket prices. So what's new! CB

Our Chairman Reflects upon 2010

The end of another year is rapidly approaching, and in many ways a good one for our railway.

Network Rail has been busy upgrading the track in several areas, notably between Norwich and Ely and we can expect soon to see the route re-signalled, the decision for which is due to be taken by December. Long-term this will considerably reduce operating costs. We will continue to draw attention to the need to speed up services from Cambridge and Peterborough to Norwich. Cambridge surely can be linked in a maximum 68 minutes for the 68 miles and the latter no more than 82 minutes for the 82 miles.

Work on upgrading the Ipswich to Peterborough line continues so that it can take higher, longer and more frequent freight trains, mainly to and from Felixstowe. It seems highly likely that the new curve at Ipswich will be built enabling freight trains to have speedier transit through the Ipswich area.

On the back of this, we would also hope for an acceleration of the passenger train services on the route, as well as to Newmarket and Cambridge. Additional platforms at Cambridge will ease the congestion both on the tracks and at existing platforms potentially leading to services being speeded up from/to Stansted - Peterborough. In the future we want to see additional services using Cambridge station. Plans have been announced for the enlargement of the booking hall there too.

Further west, the Transport and Works Act application for the building of the Hitchin flyover has been approved by the Secretary of State, subject to attention being paid to certain environmental issues that he considers need addressing in the vicinity of the works.

As to the Great Eastern Main Line through Ipswich and Colchester, the interminable renewal of the overhead power supply and track goes on and on without any indication from NR when it will all be over. They definitely need to address this but seem reluctant to do so. Customers are fed up with regular weekend disruption. There is also great pressure from the northern end of this route for shorter journey times. Not, one would like to think, at the expense of still more disruption.

National Express East Anglia (NXEA) has been busy too: we congratulate them on obtaining new trains for West Anglia services which will bring a level of amenity not seen on the route for many years. Most should be in service by December 2011. PW

NEWS ITEMS

Hearty Pedalling

On Sunday 3rd October two of our fittest members joined about a thousand cyclists setting off from Oxford to Cambridge to raise money for the British Heart Foundation. The Railfuture team was John Henderson and Simon Payne. They left Oxford just before 9am, and riding through the wet and windy weather, completed the 89 miles to Cambridge at 5.30pm.

The ride is expected to raise about £100,000 for the BHF, with Railfuture on target for making a £500 contribution. Simon and John were met in Cambridge by Ben Walsh and Peter Wakefield. *Peter said "it was a brilliant performance, and Railfuture supporters are keen to help everyone have a healthy heart"*. For more information or to make a donation to BHF go to <http://original.justgiving.com/railfuture>. JH

JUST AS WE GO TO PRESS, Nick Dibben relays this bit of news: "Norfolk County Council, like most other local authorities is planning spending cuts next year. One of the items might well be the County's support for Community Rail Partnerships (CRP). These have been very successful in increasing the number of passengers using local train services to Sheringham, Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft. If you live in Norfolk, do please contact your County Councillor, or the Council itself, demanding that the 'Partnership be retained.'" ND

WEB-ONLY NEWS WHICH MISSED THE RE DEADLINE

It is becoming pretty obvious that although most major railway projects in Control Period 4 (CP4) are safe from cuts, government is awaiting the all-significant McNulty report on a value-for-money railway. Put another way, the current funding is seen as "unsustainable"; McNulty's words, not mine.

On top of this will be the decisions made regarding: a. future franchising contracts; and b. what should be done with Network Rail. In the latter case it has already been stated that no one antidote to the current NR set-up will fit all situations. So, much to play for and an active sign that the government is determined to correct as many of the hyper-expensive outcomes of the 1997 Privatisation. I am sure we wish them well, regardless of personal political sympathies. For sure though is that CP5 promises to be a financially far stiffer contract than its predecessor. CB

Dullingham Footfall Count

Eleven members of the Branch and the local user group, MARPA (www.marpa.org.uk), conducted a footfall count at Dullingham station (between Cambridge and Newmarket) on September 16th. This station is served every two hours, i.e. every other service, thus not very frequently. (If a train stops at Dullingham, it doesn't at Kennett and vice versa).

The team counted 127 passengers, the busiest train being the 08.00 to Cambridge and the 16.59 arrival back. The numbers counted equates to nearly 40,000 users per year treating a week as 6 days with Saturday and Sunday representing one day. .

Our comments will be sent to Dullingham Parish Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council,

and the TOC. Further footfall counts elsewhere will take place for which we would certainly welcome more help. Could you? If so do please contact me, Peter Wakefield. PW

Car Parking at Stations

We have conducted footfall counts at Whittlesey, Meldreth, Newmarket, Attleborough as well as Dullingham. At all of them inadequate car parking was a major issue. For example at Attleborough, parking is a haphazard arrangement in a space where some fairly minor earthworks would create a large car park encouraging many more people to use the train.

The winners would be both the TOC and the community, as customers would have the opportunity to Park and Ride rather than face the dangers of the open road and pollute the environment. The TOCs thus far have nurtured only the money-making car-parks on their London routes. Now we must have some real thought given to provision at stations such as those listed above. PW

Peterborough-Norwich

Sadly the picture on the next page, taken alongside the Lakenheath Nature Reserve, is not in colour, yet it is still worth noting that East Midland Train's (EMT) newly refurbished Cl.158 trains look quite wonderful, inside and out, with their smart colourful livery. Some might claim that outshine all other East Anglian Train Operating Companies on those terms, well,



well, with the possible exception of First Capital Connect.

It is also very rare these days to see these diesel units in scruffy external condition. Long may it continue as indeed, the substantial hike in reliability.

However, on the downside is the news that because of delays in the delivery of new diesels to the Birmingham area, the cascade of trains to EMT hasn't happened. In fact the new coaches which were to have made possible the extension of the 13.52 Liverpool-Nottingham to Norwich next May, will not now be in position until the December 2011 timetable change. So, until extra capacity is created for this route and, hopefully, line speed improvements in the interim, any attempt at a marketing campaign is pointless, as it is already a generally over-subscribed service. CB

The Beccles Loop;

Two local Members of Parliament - Peter Aldous (Waveney) and Dr Daniel Poulter (Central Suffolk and Ipswich North) raised this issue of Beccles loop in Parliamentary Questions during the summer, reports Trevor Garrod.

Mr Aldous raised it again on October 28th, when he asked, "The East Suffolk Line has a vital role to play in helping to bring jobs to the east Suffolk and Waveney area. Can the Minister confirm that that will be taken into account when investment decisions are made?"

The Secretary of State for Transport replied, "I think my Hon Friend is referring to the so-called Beccles loop, a scheme currently being developed by Network Rail whose implementation is planned for December 2012. Network Rail is expecting a £1 million contribution from Suffolk county council. Subject to that, funds are available for the scheme, and it is expected to proceed on schedule."

This appears to mean that Network Rail can invest the money, with Government approval. We now have to ensure that the money earmarked by Suffolk County Council does not fall victim to spending cuts. Victory is now within our grasp. TG

To which our Chairman adds...."a cause engraved on all our hearts. Trevor's piece indicates that it seems about to happen ...if so, I hope it ends with a really big party!!" PW

Changes at Ipswich:

Member Andrew Gee reports that, "When I travelled to work on Monday morning, I was surprised and delighted to see the new Ipswich footbridge boldly in place between platforms 1& 2 across to 3 & 4. A very impressive sight and which would have been fascinating to see swung into position over that weekend. If the plans run on course it should be open to the public, complete with lifts, at the end of March / early April." AG

Meanwhile, Trevor Garrod tells us that "From December 13th, many more people will be changing trains at Ipswich. The extra footbridge and lifts will not be ready before the end of March at the earliest. NXEA has promised to have extra staff on duty. The East Suffolk Travellers' Association is asking passengers to complete an on-line questionnaire about their journeys between East Suffolk stations and places south of Ipswich. This will enable us to highlight any problems and take these up with the operators, County Council, Passenger Focus and local MPs.

Railfuture members are welcome to complete the questionnaire if they make a journey from, say, Lowestoft to London or Saxmundham to Chelmsford. It can be found at: www.eastsuffolktravel.org.uk or you can obtain a paper copy from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Rd South, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ. TG

Public Relations and its dismal failure:

The railway still seems incapable of resolving efficiently the rescue of failed trains on busy lines. The recent breakdown at Foxton, where 500 people were held for about 3 hours, also fouled the A10 level crossing blocking the road for a similar period

To the travelling public and media it seems that railway operation goes into 'headless chicken mode' when these 'incidents' occur. We ought to know that the safest move is to stay in the train when such things occur and trust (?) that a lot is going on behind the scenes. However, such a delay in a spot no more than 10 minutes away from a major railway junction seems to be at least 2 hours too long. It is no wonder users get angry at the seeming lack of action. NR

and the appropriate TOCs must get something better in place than this apparent confusion PW

Shaping Norfolk's Future

This was a thoughtful and most interesting meeting with Chris Starkie, the MD of Shaping Norfolk's Future. Chris requested a further meeting to discuss railway issues that need to be addressed if Norfolk is to get full benefit from its railway and this is being arranged.

Meanwhile the November covered these topics:

- 1) *Norwich to London via Ipswich in 90 mins for the 115 miles: infrastructure improvements; line speed improvements; level crossings; single lead junction at Haughley; dynamic loops at some stations between Colchester and Shenfield.*
- 2) *Norwich to Cambridge 68miles; line speed improvements, presently 5 stops in 78minutes (target 6 stops in 68minutes) plus the need for Cambridge Chesterton station, potentially the 6th stop. Expressing the advantages of linking Yarmouth to Norwich to Cambridge with a through service.*
- 3) *Norwich to Thetford - Ely - Peterborough - Grantham - Nottingham - Chesterfield - Sheffield - Stockport - Manchester Piccadilly and Oxford Road - Warrington - Liverpool Lime Street giving excellent one-change connections. Line speed improvements between Norwich to Peterborough 82miles presently in 87minutes (target max 82mins).*
- 4) *Connections at Peterborough ('Eureka!' Timetable ECML)*
- 5) *King's Lynn to Cambridge capacity - presently single track Littleport to Downham Mkt; Watlington to Kings Lynn and 4xcar only platforms at Waterbeach, Littleport, and Watlington*
- 6) *Future rail links: Witham - Stansted; Cambridge - Oxford and the East West Rail Consortium*
- 7) *Regional Connectivity - connections at Norwich; Stowmarket; Ipswich; Manningtree; Colchester; Ely; Peterborough; Cambridge.*
- 8) *Norfolk rail freight: Johnsons at Eccles Road/ Snetterton.*

*Norwich
Yarmouth
North Walsham*

Possibility of supermarket traffic; Cantley sugar works. PW

East-West Rail

The East West Rail Consortium has issued the GRIP 4 report for the reopening of the ‘Western Section’, all viewable at www.railfuture.org.uk/Ox-Cam . This shows the reopening has a Benefit/Cost Ratio (BCR) of 6.3. - which is good news as no other rail scheme in the UK has such a favourable BCR. The Consortium wants the project included for funding in NR’s Control Period 5 so that the line can open from Oxford and Aylesbury to Bletchley and Milton Keynes/Bedford by 2017.

The spotlight now starts to shine upon ‘the Central Section’ and how to reach Cambridge from Bedford. For this we need the Consortium to remain in existence. Funded as it is by the Local Authorities across East Anglia and the South Midlands this could well be a problem. We have written to the DfT and the Transport Select Committee to urge them to give their support to the EWRC. The routes that have been suggested for examination are:

1. Bedford - Sandy (approximately 6miles of renewed railway) - ECML to Hitchin.
2. Bedford - Hitchin; direct rebuilding much of the old route - then Cambridge

The Campaign continues! PW

**The Website of the Meldreth Shepreth Foxton
Rail User Group**

Note the web address of this new rail user group

<http://melbourn.org.uk/railusergroup/>

Government Spending Review

Nick Dibben writes that “After months of speculation, the Government announced it’s spending plans at the end of October. The simple message for the railways and rail users was: investment has been protected but fares will have to rise to pay for it.

The plans confirm Government’s commitment to London Crossrail, although it will be looking for around £1bn saving from the present estimates. Funding for major station upgrades will also continue. For East Anglia, the freight route upgrade between Felixstowe and Nuneaton is also protected and is seen as a key project to get lorries off the roads. Nationally, development of the new High Speed Line between London, the Midlands and North West, will continue along with other improvements to key routes.

When it comes to rolling stock, we will all have to wait a bit longer. Government is still looking at options for new Inter-City type trains and the outcome will influence greatly the choice of rolling stock/traction on many other routes

On the region’s roads, there is funding for the remaining section of single carriageway on the A11 near Thetford. However, the £1.2bn A14 upgrade between Cambridge and Huntingdon is being shelved. The press release notes that “the current scheme is simply unaffordable under

any reasonable future funding scenario”.

The Government will carry out studies to identify ways to relieve congestion that will include looking across all transport modes. Does this sound familiar? Many will remember the multi-modal study carried out in that area a few years back. The result of that study was the guided busway, two years late and four times the original budget, with the A14 work, now cancelled, at six times the original estimate. Let's hope they come up with something more practical this time.

What role can rail play in reducing traffic along this corridor? Firstly the freight upgrade mentioned above has the potential to take several thousand lorries off the road each day. Realistically, no one is going to rip up the guided busway and put rails down, but journey time and frequency improvements to rail services between Peterborough, Cambridge, Ipswich and Norwich could make a difference. It will be interesting to see, if the extra coaches provided on Cambridge to Norwich trains this December result in extra passengers.” ND

Adopt-a-Station Conference at Milton Keynes, Saturday 17 July 2010

The Station Adopter for Newmarket and Branch Committee Member, Ben Walsh, attended this informative meeting and reports below. It began with our National Express East Anglia man, Geraint Hughes, who said that over London & the Eastern Counties, 4,000 people were on their "books" as prospective/actual "Adopt-A-Station" candidates. Rather impressive! Mike Franklin, from Network Rail, then gave a talk on NR's "Community Scheme", after whom, Sue Miles, representing ACORP, spoke about the "Community Stations Initiative(s). If you apply on behalf of your adopters' group with a project, you might get lucky and be given some money to do it!

After lunch and we had talks from individual members of "Friends Of Glossop Station" and Sudbury Station respectively. So all in all a very good and useful conference. BW *Sincere apologies to Ben Walsh for omitting this report from our September issue.* CB

***Remember: Branch Meeting in Bury St Edmunds
Saturday 4 December at 14.15 hours
Friends Meeting House***

Travelling habits and the denizens of North Walsham and NR28

In their enthusiastic desire to discover not just the travel patterns of those who use North Walsham station, but why those who don't, do not. Norfolk County Council and National Express East Anglia (NEXA) enlisted the help of Railfuture members for a passenger survey. As you can see from my on-the-survey-day photograph, North Walsham can be a rather busy place. Our Chairman sports the mandatory Hi-visibility vest, as did all the surveyors.

The volunteers first attended a training afternoon over which the full extent of the survey was revealed. Apart from the station survey, every household in NR28, the 'Walsham district Post Code', was mailed with a similar questionnaire and pre-paid envelope. People in the town centre were also surveyed. If one wished, the whole process could be undertaken at a

at a special internet website.

The survey proper took place over several days in various time slots, during the final week of September. The planning was encouragingly thorough.

And the results? Well they are due to be published quite soon, as you can read from the following comments of organising team member, NEXA's Geraint Hughes:



“So as a result, we have nearly 1300 responses, (nearly 11% of the local population), 60% of which come from users and 40% from non-users. This high rate of return gives us all a great deal of reassurance that people care about their local railway.

The next stage is to analyse the results and compare peoples' views with the findings of our local audit of access and facilities, following which we will be holding a Stakeholder Workshop in January to finalise our Action Plan. All of this proves that volunteers can have a very important role in shaping the future of Community Rail Project lines, as well as proving the resource for so many community projects. Special funding has given us the opportunity to to progress the pilot project, but as always it's the people that matter!” GH

And who would quibble with that conclusion? My thanks to Peter Lawrence for providing the Geraint Hughes copy.

And now for something completely different

With summer relegated to hopefully pleasant memories, our Secretary, Nick Dibben, tries to brighten the winter gloom by relating a recent mainland Europe trip and the general impressions it left. Hope you enjoy this piece by way of a change from the parochial view. CB

A Rail Trip Across Europe

I have just returned from a journey across Europe that included Vienna, Budapest and Prague. But for the Belgium rail strike, the entire trip would have been made by train. The strike meant a flight from Gatwick to Cologne reminding me of the long check-in times and the wait for the bags to re-appear at the other end of the conveyor. Travelling through a number of countries by train provided a good overview of the state of the rail system where a number of features stood out which I will now attempt to describe

Infrastructure Investment: Many major stations had been upgraded or work was in progress,

with the station at Liege in Belgium standing out as an example of a modern station. There were also signs of new high speed routes under construction in Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic. Some of this work was not for ultra high speed but to ease significant speed restrictions on established routes or to provide extra capacity.

In the three main cities visited, work was underway on new metro lines.

Flexibility: The main lines generally had bi-directional signalling with double crossovers at nearly every station. On several occasions, the train was switched over and passed people working on the other track. The train may have been delayed by a few minutes, but far better this than closing the entire route and forcing people to use a bus!

In the cities, there were extensive tram networks with dozens of routes and complex junctions. Once again this gave the flexibility to allow the trams to be diverted during road works.

Speed difference: Although a German ICE (Inter City Express) train travelling at 250kph (150mph) is impressive, once off the new high speed lines, the speed drops considerably (the train has displays inside the coach which showed 75-80mph to be typical. Although we may not have a high speed network in Britain, average speeds on conventional routes would appear to be much faster than on the Continent.

Information: A mixed message here. First some good points.

1. Across Europe, yellow background timetable information always indicates departures with a white background for arrivals.
2. The ICE trains had train specific leaflets on each seat which gave connection details, including platforms, for every station. This information was also given out on the public address (often in several languages).
3. Platform information showed the formation of each train so passengers would know where to wait.

Less impressive was the fact that the display screen did not show all the stops the train would make, generally only the main stops were included. The information at metro stations was poor and lacking in clarity compared to that found on the London Underground.

Graffiti: Although there is some graffiti on Britain's railways, the trains and stations are generally free of this scourge and there is a policy to quickly remove it if any occurs. Not so in the countries visited, especially Slovakia and Hungary where coaches on most trains were afflicted.

Barriers: None to be seen. The metros in Vienna, Prague and Budapest were all open. There were plenty of ticket inspections at stations and on the trains. The basic fares were cheap, but the penalty for not having a ticket was high. Although there were no barriers at any station, tickets were *always* checked on the train.

We tend to moan a great deal about train services in Britain, where there is talk of a "third world system". Although lessons are to be learnt from other countries, when it comes to

quality of rolling stock, journey times and train frequency, we do compare well with the rest of Europe and in many cases are much better. There are large parts of our railway network we can be proud of. ND *Thanks, Nick, for putting our railway system into a much fairer perspective. But boy, we do need to reduce its cost and Network Rail's overly disruptive engineering regime. CB*

BBC RADIO 4 - FILE ON 4

Telling you about a programme you have missed could be a recipe for hate mail! But not I hope from delightful RAILEAST readers such as yourself. Anyhow, on Tuesday 16 November, File On 4 covered the the cost to you and me, of our railway: The Great Train Robbery was the less than inspired title.

Its three main platforms for scrutiny were overcrowding, complex ticket rules, and Network Rail. Common enough and pretty ambitious given the programme was only 37 minutes in length.

Transport Secretary, Phil Hammond was quite clear about two intentions: first; that he would be announcing before Christmas details of rolling stock *orders* (he purposely distinguished *orders* from just *plans*!); secondly, he was adamant that changes in franchising and the modus operandi of Network Rail were quite close to being resolved. “..making the railway affordable for user and taxpayer alike, and making it fit for the 21st century was the major challenge for the Department for Transport “ (and the Treasury??), were his words.

Various examples of confusing or seemingly plain daft railway behaviour were cited including new Pendolino trains possibly going into storage until 2012, “cattle truck” conditions on the 08.08 Bolton to Manchester, and getting off Cambridge station but only after paying £20 excess for having the wrong ticket after misinformed purchasing.

This man was heading for a wedding in Edinburgh using the sleeper from Euston to and fro. Unfortunately he didn't include his return ticket from Cambridge to Kings Cross buying this separately, but showing the booking clerk the sleeper receipt/ticket. Result: uneventful passage of the barriers en route to London and at Kings Cross on his return. But not at Cambridge where he arrived before 09.00hours. Result: £20 levied for not having valid ticket.

Not unexpectedly, he challenged this decision but no refund was forthcoming from FCC, although he was told he could appeal to the independent Penalty Fares Appeal Service. Some months later Cambridge station sold him another *OFF-PEAK* ticket to Kings Cross, for travelling on the 07.15 no less. After completing the round trip successfully he raised the matter with staff who said that, once again, he should not have been sold that ticket. Inspires confidence, doesn't it?

This was a good programme although unlikely to have revealed anything startling to our keenest and best informed members. How different to the 1970s and '80s when so much in the media about the railway was misconceived or just downright ill informed. And whilst some might now accuse me of exaggeration; I know that more than a little of the change is down to RDS/Railfuture action and writing all those years ago. It still matters today, too! CB

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

Election to Committee. (hence a big font!)

From time to time, every committee needs refreshing with new, *active* members bringing a renewed focus and hopefully, special skills to our work. Might you be one of these? If so, please do write to me before mid-January, getting another member to nominate you. We would love to hear from you. Then at the AGM, which is exactly the occasion to make changes, it goes to a vote. Contact details are on the back page. CB/ND

Finally, may I wish you a happy and peaceful Christmas with a good New Year to follow. CB

THE NEXT ISSUE OF RAIL EAST

News and articles to me, Chris Burton(CB), by Monday 17 January 2011 at the latest.

This includes any comments, criticisms and, of course, bouquets; but with the inevitable caveat that all run the risk of the editor's red pencil - or should that be the *Delete* key?

Railfuture

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railfuture

EAST ANGLIA BRANCH :

Dates for your Diary

BRANCH MEETINGS 2010/11

**Bury St.Edmunds 14.15 hrs
4 December at the Friends
Meeting House IP33 1SJ**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
(AGM)
Cambridge 14.15hrs
26 February at the Central
Library.**

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