



Your letters

This would have taken over two hours and cost £20 plus. In the end I went by car which took just over an hour with costs similar to the second option.

It also gave me more time in Stoke. That was for one passenger. For two or more, the car costs remain almost constant whilst the public transport charges increase according to the number involved.

The journey might have been more attractive had the National Forest line to Derby been available but after a promised reopening in 1990 that seems a lost cause.

Is it any wonder that public transport is hardly a first option?

Let us remind ourselves that motorists are burdened with the costs of road tax, insurance and MoT whether the car is used or not.

Ted Bottle, 114 Meadow Lane, Coalville, Leicestershire LE67 4DP
footlights2@yahoo.co.uk

Congratulations

This note is to pass on a message of congratulations on the recent issue of *Railwatch* which was passed unanimously at a recent meeting of the Wessex branch committee.

We appreciate all the hard work which is needed to put together such an informative and readable magazine. Keep up the good work.

John Friedberger, The Harrow Way, Whitchurch, Hampshire RG28 7QT
J.Friedberger@btinternet.com

Time for optimism

May I offer my congratulations to the guys who compile *Railwatch*. This is a first class publication. I am amazed that an organisation with only 2,200 members can turn out a magazine of such quality.

On the Ebbw Vale article though, I feel it gave a rather pessimistic portrayal of English railways.

In England, we currently have the following heavy rail under construction:

- Corby line re-opening which should give a boost to Thameslink services.

- Aylesbury Vale Parkway opening giving hope to the East-West link.

- East London line extension and the reopening of Dalston viaduct.

With Corby and Aylesbury coming on line at the end of this year, I am sure these will surpass the original passenger estimates and will give rail a real positive publicity boost.

With the above rail schemes opening, we can open people's eyes to benefit of rail over bus.

If we work well with other pro-rail organisations such as Friends of the Earth and the Campaign for Better Transport, we could stop the madness of the Luton-Dunstable busway. I am afraid we are too

late to stop the Cambridge scheme. Luton-Dunstable could make the beginning of a Herts-Beds tramway system. There are intact corridors such as the Hatfield-St Albans and the Nicky Line which could link nicely together.

If we could at least delay guided bus until the opening and forecasted disaster of the Cambridge scheme, Luton could benefit from Cambridge mistakes

Malcolm Smith, Hitchin
malc.on-groups@ntlworld.com

Yes Minister

Please convey my thanks to Mike Crowhurst for the article on rail issues for the Minister.

I have made 250 photocopies for members of the Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways.

Congratulations to the editorial team as well for producing such an attractive magazine.

However what disturbs me about Railfuture (and all transport campaigners that I am aware of) is lack of strategy in campaigning. Complaining-analysing is not a strategy for success.

The anti-roads campaigning is only anti-roads. Where are the pro-public transport people putting on real pressure?

In my view the More Trains Less Strain campaign did wonders in publicising the First Great Western-Government disaster. Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways has had a success locally and Save Our Railways is excellent at sending out the right message.

My confidence is in the rail unions and I suggest that you invite written (and spoken) input to future copies of *Railwatch* and rail conferences. We know the government policy is pro-roads and pro-air. We need to increase our efforts by exposing business interests and highlighting health issues (carbon dioxide emissions made worse by government policy for instance).

Publicly owned bus and rail services would contribute to reducing carbon emissions. And it is a popular demand.

Julie Boston, 17 Belmont Rd, Bristol BS6 5AW
severnbeach@hotmail.co.uk

Down Under

I read with interest the article on the Pilbara Rail (Rio Tinto) operation in Western Australia.

This is just one of two such operations, the other, which is just as or even more extensive, is operated by BHP-Billiton and is just taking delivery of EMD SD70-ACe locomotives with the very latest in "steerable" bogies and the new advanced Mitsubishi Electric control and electric package. The very first of GE's model AC6000CW

locos were delivered to Australia's north-west, before their use in the US. Moreover, Fortescue Metals are currently building a third iron-ore network in Western Australia to serve their new mines and this should start operation later this year.

As your author notes, not too many people know that Australia has some of the world's most impressive heavy haul railways operating in some of the harshest conditions on the planet.

Rick Coles, 14 Hutchinson Street, Bardwell Park, New South Wales 2207, Australia.
rickcoles@gmail.com

Editors' note: You can see Rick's photographs of Japanese and Australian trains at <http://galleryrick.photonation.co.uk>

Electrify now

Another excellent issue of *Railwatch* although I am most concerned to read of falling membership.

At the foot of the back page, column four, you state that, "Only 39% of the railway in this country is electrified."

Regrettably this figure would seem to be too optimistic; on page 158 of the March 2008 issue of *Railway Gazette International* column three, it states that, "only 33% of NR's 15,795 route-km are electrified at 25kV AC or 750V DC."

This is the figure I had in my mind from some time ago.

I take no pleasure in telling you of this. If the moronic lardheads in Westminster and Whitehall wish to abrogate their responsibilities for electrification, either through stupidity, intellectual frailty/cowardice, or knavery, we should not assist by making things look any rosier than they are, should we!

It will be interesting, should they permit the vast, far-reaching and all-embracing scheme from Barnt Green to Bromsgrove to go ahead, to see how they trumpet this "Great Step Forward".

It is - what - four miles? Good old Britain. Utterly useless.

Keep up your good work.

John Gilbert, Ranalt, 27 Pixiefield, Cradley, Herefordshire WR13 5ND
ejgilbert10ranalt@tesco.net

Sustrans and rail

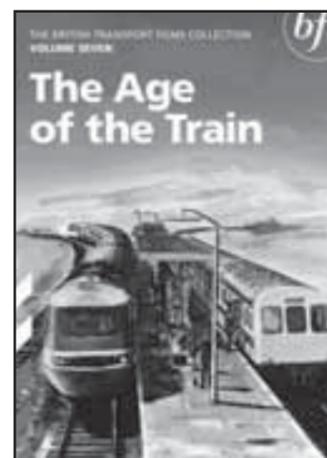
Catherine Barber (letters, *Railwatch* 115) raises some issues that have exercised the cycle promotion lobby recently.

The position on Voyagers (Class 220 and 221) seems rather confused.

Before the franchise was announced we were aware that Bombardier were pricing and planning for

Send your letters to:

The Editors, 4 Christchurch Square, London E9 7HU.
Email: editor@railwatch.org.uk
Railwatch also welcomes articles and pictures



The British Transport Films Collection is being re-issued in digital form as DVDs.

Volume 7, above, is a two-disc set including 18 films made by the British Transport Commission from 1962 to 1982.

The "corporate blue" era of British Rail saw some of the greatest advancements in rail travel that the world had ever seen, with over 100mph running becoming standard.

Travelling inter-city was the new way and one film features the building of the Inter-City 125 high-speed trains.

British Transport Films hold one of the largest and most impressive collections of documentary films in Britain and form one of the jewels of the BFI National Film Archive.

The original films are preserved by the BFI which is marketing this £20 DVD.

BFI DVDs are available from many DVD shops, from the Filmstore at BFI Southbank, London SE1, by mail order from the Filmstore on 0207 815 1350 or online at www.bfi.org.uk/filmstore

modifications to the Cross Country fleet but apparently no changes were being planned for the bike space. This space as Catherine says has an inherently hazardous design that fails to make use of the weight of the bike to stop it swinging around and requires the cyclist to make a very awkward lifting move. Lifting the bike requires upper body strength and thus is a problem for those who are physically less likely to have this capacity (ie everyone except fit males and very fit females). Recently, moreover, family groups have been blocked from booking more than two spaces on a train, and we have had reports that two of the hooks have been removed on some trains. Arriva Trains however say

that there is no reduction in cycle capacity. Clearly we have a significant failure in communication, and the computerised cycle reservation system continues to be less than reliable. (Although full marks to National Express East Coast for re-introducing online cycle reservations.)

Meanwhile EMTrains seems to be refusing all bookings for space on fast trains to Leeds and York and insisting on 24 hours notice to make any cycle booking. We have yet to hear of any motorway system where 24 hours notice is required before you can use it!

I can only agree with Catherine that the train operators need to start regarding cyclists as an asset to their customer base, providing additional custom at non-peak times, rather than an inconvenience that has to be grudgingly accommodated.

Thanks to the CTC's public transport campaigner Dave Holladay, for some of the material in this letter.

Simon Geller, 12 Carfield Avenue, Sheffield S8 9HY
simonmichaelgeller@gmail.com

Hall Farm curve

I refer to the campaign to reopen Hall Farm curve on page 4 of *Railwatch* 115. If some Chingford services are routed to and from Stratford via a reopened Hall Farm curve, this might presumably result in a reduction of services at Clapton to and from Liverpool Street.

One way to compensate for this would be to add stops at Clapton by some Lea Valley line trains, for example those to and from Hertford East.

Services between Clapton and the Lea Valley line are now virtually nonexistent, whereas in BR days Hertford East trains regularly called at Clapton.

An additional advantage of this would be to provide a link between Clapton and Tottenham Hale, which is an awkward journey by alternative public transport.

And it would open up opportunities for leisure travel between Clapton and the Lea Valley park.

Martin Messias, 16 Woolmer House Upper Clapton Road, London E5 8SU
martin.messias@btinternet.com

Start at Brighton

Graham Nalty's article in *Railwatch* 115 on the future for high-speed rail in Britain showed that most debate seems to be about high-speed lines starting from London and going north.

Why is this? A line desperate for relief is the London-Brighton. There are several reasons:

1. It is at capacity.
2. Bottlenecks include East Croydon and Gatwick.
3. Gatwick Airport is growing.
4. Brighton is the nation's 19th busiest station, Gatwick 21st and East Croydon 13th. These compare well with many northern cities, e.g. Leeds 18th, Liverpool 20th,

Newcastle 39th and Sheffield 47th. 5. Main roads in the corridor are at capacity.

Is a new Brighton-Gatwick-London line with a loop to Heathrow that then continues and joins a line going north from London not worth investigating?

David Hurdle, 22 Patriot Close, Spalding PE11 1YA
d.hurdle@btinternet.com

Questions for future

Almost everyone except the Secretary of State for Transport now seems to be behind the development of a high-speed rail network in the UK, but Graham Nalty's article: "The future for high speed rail in Britain" (*Railwatch* 115) set me thinking. Would such a move be consistent with the Government's climate chaos policy?

At a minimum the Climate Change Bill will specify a reduction of 60% in carbon emissions by 2050, and, if the Tyndall Centre's advice is to be followed and Gordon Brown believed, could well specify an 80%, even a 90% reduction.

In that event every aspect of life would have to achieve proportional reductions, and it's inconceivable that transport could contribute its share without a considerable overall reduction in travel.

Technological and means of travel changes would not be enough, especially where road, rail and air travel are all still growing.

Although a high-speed rail network would reduce carbon emissions if people transferred from planes, it would also have the opposite consequence by encouraging more travel overall, and promoting a transfer from intercity trains (the faster the speed the higher the energy consumption).

All environmentalists, and most rail travel supporters including me, have long argued that road building stimulates traffic growth.

What we tend not to recognise is that if the roads are at capacity, as they are, an increase in rail capacity and comfort would also stimulate more travel with its carbon emission implications.

Take the current plans to lengthen commuter trains and station platforms. Certainly they are likely to tempt some out of the cars, but the increased capacity and greater comfort will probably also tempt more people than now to live a long carbon emitting way from their city jobs.

Clearly the issue of future travel planning is a complex one given the need to reduce carbon emission, with ramifications well beyond the high speed train-air travel debate. Nevertheless, one thing is certain: of the means of powered transport available, standard rail services are best placed to allow travel that can be accommodated within demanding carbon emission limits.

David Hughes, 120 Conway Road, London N14 7BG
davidmyrna.hughes@btinternet.com

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Welsh reopening

I was most interested to read the item in the April issue about the restoration of passenger services to Ebbw Vale, particularly the call for the restoration of services from Porthmadoc to Bangor.

Having travelled over this line innumerable times before, during and after the Second World War (mainly from Bangor to Chwillog but sometimes to Pwllheli via Afonwen) I got to know every bit of it very well, and would love to travel over it again eventually.

However, for me, I doubt if it will ever get off the ground in my lifetime unless I survive to a three figure age!

One of the most interesting features of the restored line will surely be the dual standard/narrow gauge track from Caernarfon to Dinas Junction where the Welsh Highland will branch off for Porthmadoc and Blaenau Ffestiniog. From there of course, back to Bangor via Llandudno Junction.

So in addition to shortening the distance, and time, for a Barmouth to Bangor journey, this restoration would open up a very attractive holiday rail trip. All the more reason for aiming to achieve my century! Here's hoping!

Ellis James-Robertson, 8 Whittington Road, Worcester WR5 2JU
rellisjr@btinternet.com

Silver slipper?

We're all used to the public performance measure as the benchmark of each train operator's reliability and punctuality.

Pursuing the carbon footprint table reproduced on page 4 of *Railwatch* 115, may I suggest a new environmental performance measure? This would be a combination of carbon performance and load factor, and comparisons might further incentivise train operators and rolling stock companies to improve both the energy efficiency of their fleets and the patronage of their off-peak services. Domestic air's environmental performance measure is abysmal despite its 70% average

load factor. For the purposes of gathering statistics, inter-city rail is assumed to have a load factor of only just over half that, 40%.

Just imagine how much better inter-city rail's environmental performance measure would be if the statisticians accepted that a 60% load factor was more realistic, to match the 60% load factor assumed for the inter-city road coach.

Should not higher load factors be an explicit target, like an improved public performance measure? Similarly, "all other trains" assume an even lower load factor, of just 30% - the same as cars! Again, should not a 50% increase in the "all other trains" load factor be an explicit target? That would also expose the real culprits who are "carting around fresh air".

Devotees of a certain monthly magazine will be familiar with the annual Golden Spanner awards made each autumn by its industry and technology editor for progress in the national fleet reliability improvement programme overseen by the Association of Train Operators. Any sponsors out there for an annual Silver Slipper Award, for the lightest carbon footprint?

Roger W Blake, vice-chairman, London and South-East Branch, 70 Dynevor Road, London N16 0DX
roger.blake@hackney.gov.uk



Your letters

It is a vital and mathematically sound foundation for building up the performance of any rail passenger system.

Andrew Selden, 4115 Sunnyside Road, Edina, Minnesota 55424
ASelden@Briggs.com

Making connections

I am president of the Minnesota Association of Railroad Passengers, an independent regional advocacy group, and vice-president – Law and Policy, of the United Rail Passenger Alliance, a national-level professional rail policy research and advocacy organization headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida.

We enjoy receiving *Railwatch*, and read with interest the *Railwatch* 115 article about network intra-connectivity.

This is a subject to which we have devoted a great deal of attention over the past two decades. One of our former members and colleagues, the late Dr Adrian Herzog, developed a mathematical framework explaining how and why connectivity by itself (at constant levels of market penetration) drives exponential growth in flow volume through the network.

We also arrived at the conclusion that volume varied nearly as the square of the number of stops connected through the network.

We had not been aware of the earlier sources cited in your article, and we are eager to get and read those books.

The issue in the US is that the brain trust that runs Amtrak views its mission as operating point-to-point, usually discontinuous “corridor” services, and then only in markets where they can elicit a state to subsidise the operation, except in the Washington-New York-Boston Northeast Corridor where Congressional and union politics have assured a fully federally funded operation. This strategy tends to minimize productivity, efficiency, market share and revenue, but it is much easier to operate.

We have long argued that on a strictly business and economic basis, wholly apart from political considerations, Amtrak should allocate a much greater share of its capital resources to building up an interconnected network of inter-regional long distance routes.

Amtrak does not want to hear this, however, because it calls into doubt its long-term business strategy of pursuing “corridor” development and high speed rail.

We have argued – largely to deaf ears – that a comparable effort devoted to developing a fully-integrated network of long distance services would leave Amtrak awash with more passengers and more revenue than they would know what to do with. Thank you for printing the item on “Wellington’s Connectivity.”

Fares info

You ask in *Railwatch* 115 about the availability of fares information, other than on the internet.

The ATOC National Fares Manuals provide comprehensive details of all fares, including full details of restrictions on the use of discounted tickets. The manual is in seven volumes (Scotland, North West, East, Midland, South West, South and London), although most people could get all the information they need from the volume covering their home station.

They are available to the public from TSO (The Stationery Office) Ltd, PO Box 29, Norwich NR3 1GN, at £15 each. There is also a RailLinks Manual, giving details of all through bookings to airports, shipping services, buses and leisure attractions.

These manuals give more information than is available over the internet and are invaluable for the serious rail traveller or rail enthusiast.

John Savage, 16 Lakeside, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5HN



Good value

Joanna Griffiths refers to the discontinuation of the OAG Guide in *Railwatch* 115. However since 2007, the National Fares Manual has been available to the public at £15 per volume.

One volume is sufficient if all one wants is the fares from one particular location, as this covers fares to all stations in the country.

For example, I have the South manual which gives fares (a much more complete listing than the old OAG) to the whole of Britain from my area. Considering the size (over 1,500 large pages), I think it is good value for £15.

N V Read, 43 Twitten Way, Worthing BN14 7JU

Privatisation bonus

Thanks for doing an excellent job with *Railwatch*. With refer-



The UK Rail Timetable, which we feared would disappear last year, is now published by TSO.

The latest edition covers train services from 18 May to 13 December and uses data supplied by Network Rail.

TSO has committed to publish each edition with the timetables and accompanying instructions reproduced in exactly the same high quality, recognisable style as seen in all previous editions published by Network Rail.

The timetable is being sold at all W H Smith station shops throughout the UK and is also available online from the TSO Shop at www.tsoshop.co.uk. Priced at £15, the UK Rail Timetable (ISBN: 9780117020733) is available at <http://www.tsoshop.co.uk> or by calling 0870 600 5522.

TSO (The Stationery Office) is Britain's largest publisher by output, publishing 15,000 printed and electronic products each year.

To celebrate their publication of the rail timetable, TSO have given a copy of the new timetable to the following six *Railwatch* letter writers: Simon Geller, John Gilbert, Ted Bottle, John Savage, Martin Wright and Jim Howison.

ence to the national fares manuals you mentioned in *Railwatch* 115, I have found that I can save the cost – they cost £15 each – by knowing what tickets to buy. You should only need one. Also well worth having is the Rail Links Manual which costs £8.

Privatisation has at least made it easier to book more than one ticket for a journey so as to get a cheaper overall price. It is well worth asking libraries to stock the manual.

C Oley, 37 New Road, Ormskirk, L40 1SR

Editors' note: Good advice from Mr Savage, Mr Read and Mr

Oley but sadly it may be overtaken by events.

Tina Chummun, marketing executive of TSO, reports that the Association of Train Operating Companies has decided that there is no longer a requirement for a paper edition of the National Fares Manuals or RailLinks Manuals. Train companies say they do not now need the manuals because there is good information online.

National Rail Enquiries is the official information source for National Rail, providing impartial advice on all aspects of train

travel – timetables, fares, tickets and other product information. Visit nationalrail.co.uk for more information.

Train companies also offer specific information on their own websites.

You are able to contact ATOC directly at: enquiry@atoc.org should you wish to comment on the withdrawal of paper fares manuals.

Grand Central

I see that Grand Central, having at long last got their full service into operation (1/3/08), apparently intend to introduce a £15 (2nd class) single leg excess on their first up train from Sunderland and the late afternoon service from King's Cross from 10/3/08 on weekdays. Why am I not surprised? What happened to the simple, transparent, value for money approach promised?

David Whittaker, Stockton-on-Tees
david-whittaker@ntlworld.com

Editors' note: Grand Central issued a press release in May entitled "Fares get fairer on Grand Central" and announced that new fares applied from 18 May, to "remove the confusion" about its peak time supplement. It said its peak standard return fare from Hartlepool to London is under £100.

Virgin fares

As you probably know, Virgin Trains operates a policy of allowing people with Senior Railcards (and staff of charities) to travel at peak times at Saver rates.

I have found this very useful as, although I am retired, I attend meetings of some charity trustees. I was dismayed to be told by the ticket collector that this concession is to be withdrawn in September.

According to him, Virgin is forced to do this as part of the policy of simplifying the fare structure and also to reduce the subsidy government pays to train operators.

The change will mean that my fare to London will increase from £41.20 to £151.80 (for charity staff without railcards the increase will, I believe, be from £62.40 to £230).

I have not seen any public announcement of this change. It may be another unintended result of a sensible policy of simplifying rules, or it may be a deliberate policy change that has not been publicised.

I hope that *Railwatch* will do its best to ensure that this regressive change is reversed.

Two recent incidents also illustrate some of the problems passengers face. I travelled from Manchester to Southport the other week.

The train (a Pacer I think) had water coming through the windows and roof to such an extent that it was difficult to find a dry

seat. The ticket inspector said he reported such things.

I complained to Northern Rail, but got no response. Northern Rail seems generally an improvement on its predecessor, but obviously still has a long way to go.

I wanted to travel from Manchester to London, then to Sheffield and back to Manchester over two days.

I phoned national rail enquiries and they told me the cheapest way was to buy singles (which would have cost me more than twice the return fare to London).

This was rubbish, of course, as the ticket office in Manchester confirmed by selling me a return ticket with an extension to allow me to travel via Chesterfield, no more than the normal return fare to London.

I complained to national rail enquiries and just got a routine reply apologising. Which? has highlighted this sort of problem in getting accurate information, but it seems to make no difference.

Martin Wright, 24 Fairlands Road, Sale, Manchester M33 4AY
wrightm191@hotmail.com

Let's go Waverley

Here in Bathgate, I am happy to see preparatory work near my home on the “missing link” to Airdrie, knowing that finance for the whole Edinburgh-Bathgate-Airdrie project – which involves upgrading, rebuilding and electrification work – is secure.

But I wish similar arrangements were in hand for the proposed Borders project, the former Waverley route.

Why did not SNP Scottish Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson come out and say he did not want it to go ahead, instead of leaving the finance uncertain.

He could have authorised a double track route as far as, say, Gorebridge, which could have served large catchment areas around Dalkeith and Newtongrange.

This could have been a step towards a Borders rail line which a future Scottish government might have been more inclined to finance.

A future government might also prefer a better scheme to the half-baked original proposal – a single track terminating just beyond Galashiels.

Why on earth was permission given to build houses on the track bed, as at Stow?

Surely ever since closure in 1969, the possibility has always existed that this line could be reopened at least in part.

Mr Stevenson should also have announced financial arrangements for another much-needed project – the return to passenger use of the Edinburgh South Suburban loop. Congestion at the

western approach to Edinburgh Waverley station is often given as a reason for not going ahead.

But why not have an almost complete circle service between the east end of Waverley, round to the recently reopened bay platform 0 at Haymarket and vice versa?

If in future more capacity was created at the west end of Waverley, the circle could be completed in full.

Where there's a will, there's a way. All we seem to get on the Edinburgh South Sub is talk and no action.

Jim Howison, 54 Whiteside, Bathgate, West Lothian EH48 2RG

Golden memories

I recall, back in the days of British Rail, a couple of things which do not exist today under our fragmented railway system. The first was Merrymakers – day trips by train to places of interest at a very reasonable price.

The second was Golden Rail Holidays where one could book a holiday which included hotel accommodation and train travel in a package.

Most European railways are state-owned and provide a better service than we have in the UK.

As Dr B Ching rightly points out in *Private Eye*, British Rail provided a better service for around a quarter of today's subsidy while fares, in real terms, were lower than today's. Nor did BR close for maintenance at weekends and bank holidays.

Roger Smith, 67 The Street, Little Waltham, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 3NT

Bike space on BR

I was very interested in the letter in *Railwatch* 115 from Catherine Barber, from Hungerford, regarding the lack of bike space on trains.

The problem I think clearly stems from the Conservative Party's wish to privatise the railways, and subsequently the micro-management of our railway network by the Department of (and now for) Transport.

Both parties never fully thought out the consequences of privatisation and beyond. Indeed there has never been a proper national policy on transport systems in my lifetime, and despite parliamentary rhetoric that would suggest there is!

Whilst I appreciate that the folding bike I have is accepted on trains, most of the BR-built multiple-unit trains, both suburban and main line express units, had accommodation for both luggage and a guard – or as they are known today conductors – at both ends of the four-coach units.

These were introduced from 1948 through to the 1980s, so that we appear to have gone backwards

with our present-day rolling stock.

Clearly these vehicles would have had adequate luggage space for bicycles, prams, pushchairs and small parcels, let alone the luggage of holiday makers such as those who use the Lincolnshire “Poacher line” from either Nottingham or Grantham to Skegness and other Lincolnshire resorts.

Isn't it time that the Department for Transport, train operators and the rolling stock companies took these issues on board?

It might also mean less overcrowding for passengers if their luggage could be safely stowed in a luggage compartment.

I would be very surprised if European rail operators had not made provision for adequate luggage compartments on their trains.

Alan M Waddington, Highfield, 25 Viking Way, Metheringham, Lincs LN4 3DW

British hybrid



Class 73 73134 at Stanhope in April

Picture: John Carter

Bombardier's claim that they have produced the first train to run off both electricity and diesel is slightly wide of the mark.

While it may be the first to have both modes provide similar power, many readers will know that BR Southern Region had Class 73 and 74 electro-diesel locos which could run off both the third rail and by diesel power on limited stretches of unelectrified line, such as in marshalling yards and in docks for boat trains.

I believe some 73s are still in service in their electric capacity on the Gatwick Express.

Paul Murphy, 68 Leabank Square, Hackney, London E9 5LR
murphsup1@hotmail.com

DB takeover

Unlike your columnist, I'm not happy that Deutsche Bahn has taken over Chiltern Railways (*Railwatch* 115). For though DB may be an excellent rail company, they aren't based in this country.

I'm sure I'm not the only person concerned that our national infrastructure is falling into foreign hands.

Tim Mickleburgh, 33 Littlefield Lane, Grimsby, DN31 2AZ
timmickleburgh2002@yahoo.co.uk