



# Railway Development NEWS

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members

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**October 1980**

## Chairman's letter

Dear Member,

A very short, but important Bill was presented to Parliament recently by Tony Speller, Conservative M.P. for North Devon. Unfortunately, due to lack of parliamentary time it lapsed. Mr Speller, however, hopes to re-introduce it in the next Session and I have seen him and promised the Society's full support.

The Bill would enable B.R. to re-instate a passenger service on an existing freight-only line for an experimental period without having to go through the expensive and time consuming T.U.C.C. procedure a second time if the experiment proved unsuccessful.

Mr Speller argues that (1) this will cost the Government nothing, (2) will add flexibility to British Rail and (3) will encourage rail rather than road for the bulk carriage of people, particularly in holiday areas like N. Devon or in commuting areas where cost and availability of fuel will become an increasing problem.

When, with two colleagues, I met the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Transport, Kenneth Clarke M.P. we raised the question of Government support for the Bill and Mr Clarke could see no reason for objection. I understand that since our meeting the Minister, Mr Fowler, has expressed approval of the idea contained in the Bill.

This will be an important item to discuss at our next Rail Users' Group Conference (See p.19) but in the meantime I urge all our members to publicise Mr Speller's efforts and write to their M.Ps seeking their support for this very important measure in the next parliamentary session.

A query has been raised that the Bill will mean that if a railway passenger service is reinstated there need never be a T.U.C.C. Inquiry to withdraw it. This point could, however, be covered by reinstating the service for a stated time (say 2 years) after which it could not be withdrawn without going through the T.U.C.C. procedure. If it was successful B.R. would undoubtedly be inclined to continue it after the experimental period.

There is nothing to be lost by supporting Mr Speller's efforts and everything to be gained in areas where there is a demand for restoration of a rail passenger service.

Yours sincerely

R.V.Banks

## B.R: THE BIG SELL-OFF!

3

Are the latest proposals to sell off the more profitable assets of B.R. a symptom of the financial malaise which now besets the industry or is it purely a political move to satisfy the tenets of Tory dogma? Significantly, as we saw in the last issue (p.6) B.R. made an operational surplus in 1979 of £70.2m. but after paying interest and other financial charges this was reduced to a net loss of £400,000. Of the subsidiaries which it is proposed to sell off, Sealink made a profit last year of £14m. of which £7.6m. went towards financing B.R.'s other activities, whilst the figures for British Transport Hotels and the party Board were £0.3m. and £20.3m. respectively. Only B.R. Hovercraft made a loss, making it a less attractive proposition to private investors.

Within this scenario B.R. will have to make a decision within the next 2 months whether to impose a further fare increase on top of the 20% rise in January if it is not to overshoot the cash limit of £750m. set by the Government this year by up to £50m. What then will happen to the income which it would otherwise derive if the above assets are sold off? Will the Government step in and meet the difference? In the present financial climate clearly NO!

Apart from the financial implications of the proposed sell-off what will be the effect on such services as Sealink which is at present a vital link in the British and Continental rail systems? If it fell into the hands of one of its rivals would its operations be fragmented, a move which could be particularly serious in East Anglia? Keith Wickenden M.P. - one of Mrs. Thatcher's favoured sons of the Conservative Party - and Chairman of European Ferries Ltd., has already been reported in the "East Anglian Daily Times" to be studying the proposals with some interest.

Nevertheless it is the financial needs of the railways which are most pressing for ever since 1975 B.R. has been forced to peg the level of support to passenger services which cannot be justified on commercial grounds to the level of that year in real terms through P.S.O. Grant. Last year this came to £530m. out of a possible total of £544m. What, however, happens to the amount of this grant which it does not spend, which since 1976 has amounted to £147m. Two-thirds in fact is kept by the Government while the remaining third is transferred to its reserves but under Treasury and Transport Department regulations it cannot use this money to finance urgent investment needs. In a recent speech to the N.U.R. Conference in Guernsey, Sir Peter Parker objected to being subject to such restrictive cash limits and said "we have got to get these rules sensibly changed, but while we have them we have got to live by them."

Meanwhile in its recent report for 1979/80 \* the House of Commons Select Committee on Transport concluded that bus and rail services will be seriously threatened and fares likely to rise steeply unless the Government changes its policies to the nationalised transport industries. Government projections of increased internal generation of investment funds and reduced reliance on public finance in the early 1980s by B.R. and the N.B.C. were described by the Committee as "very difficult to accept, unless we also accept that the range of services will fall, and that prices and charges to customers will have to be increased heavily.

The Chairman of the Committee, Tom Bradley M.P., has also stated recently that the Government's expectation of a significant improvement in the financial performance of B.R. and the N.B.C. appeared to be based on wishful thinking. On rail, in particular, the Committee noted that whilst transport industries have been less hard hit than other nationalised industries in government squeezes, BR is targeted to cover two-thirds of its depreciation in 1982, compared with only a third in 1978, at a time when its Chairman says that the level of investment must be raised by at least 30% just to replace worn out assets.

Even now the first rail closures are being mooted (Epping - Ongar; Glasgow - Kilmalcolm; Huddersfield - Clayton West and Sheffield - Penistone) and all because the local authorities are no longer prepared to support them financially. To these must be added 40 or more services which may also have to be considered for closure unless the Government and/or L.As provide increased financial support. So much for Mr Fowler's promise of no "substantial" rail closures. Even Sir Peter Parker has recently gone on record as saying that some secondary rail services may have to be replaced by buses, a concept which is still being expounded by senior railway management in academic transport circles.

It seems therefore that the Society will have to brace itself for a tough time in the early 1980s and to apply the knowledge and expertise which its forerunners acquired during the Beeching era. !!!

\* Second Report of the Transport Committee, session 1979/80. (House of Commons Papers 573 HMSO £2.75)

*Have you ordered your RDS tie yet?*

(See MEMBERS ONLY SUPPLEMENT p.2)

With this issue... "M.O. SUPPMNT" - "IN PARL."

## WHAT THE SOCIETY SAID TO THE MINISTER

As the Chairman has already explained (p.2) representatives of RDS had a 1½ hour meeting, on 4th June, with Kenneth Clarke, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Transport and a number of his senior civil servants. With him were Dr Michael Caton, Vice-Chairman and Steve Wilkinson, Chairman of the East Anglian Branch.

Whilst the Society was heartened by Mr Fowler's recent statement on closures concern was expressed at the apparent lack of finance to replace the existing life-expired rolling stock. Mr Clarke stressed that the Department considered the ideas contained in the C.T.C.C.'s report on low cost railways (see R.D.N. No.6, p.3-4) were well worth pursuing and had asked B.R. to investigate them. Experiments were also to be carried out on the East Suffolk Line with the prototype lightweight DMU and also the installation of some radio-control systems.

He emphasised that there was a limit to the amount of investment and public subsidy that could be made available to nationalised industries; agreed that B.R. had not put much effort into promoting the OPS services but thought there might be a change of emphasis now the Government had made its policy clear.

The Society's attitude to Tony Speller's Bill has already been explained and we asked the Department for its backing and for the Government to provide additional funds to implement re-opening schemes. Whilst he could see certain difficulties in some schemes Mr Clarke saw no general objections and was generally sympathetic to the Bill. Nevertheless it was primarily a matter for B.R. and the County Councils had a definitive role to play in assessing the transport needs of their areas. Whilst the Department could not take the initiative it could provide support to interested County Councils through Transport Supplementary Grant.

On the suggestion that tax concessions, similar to those available to users of company cars, should be made available to companies who paid the fares of their employees, to increase the passenger carrying potential of rail, Mr Clarke said this was more a matter for the Treasury. He stressed that the Govt. had taken a number of steps which had increased the cost of car usage but that further proposals to tax company cars had met with considerable opposition and had therefore been dropped.

In considering B.R.'s costing methods the Society considered that insufficient account was taken of contributory revenue and the Minister recognised, as did B.R., that its present system was not perfect and improvements were being sought all the time, especially with the development of an avoidable costing system.

On the subject of freight services the Society wanted to see the maximum amount carried on the railways and asked that the Government give financial inducements to this end, in particular by enlarging the scope of Sec. 8 Grants. The position of the China Clay industry (mentioned elsewhere in this issue) was typical and the Society urged that the present procedure for obtaining permission to establish new rail facilities should be expedited. Mr Clarke agreed that rail was ideally suited to transport bulk materials and pointed to the success of B.R.'s Speedlink services. The Board did, however, have a commercial remit for their freight business and it was not open to the Government to subsidise it.

Finally on the subject of level crossings the Society asked whether a contribution from the Department's road budget could be allocated for their maintenance and construction, particularly as the increased use of modern lifting barriers had a cost/benefit advantage to road users. As they already received grant aid under EEC Regulations and the Department's budget was already severely constrained the Minister considered that there was little more the Government could do other than pursue with B.R. its existing plan to replace older manual crossings with automatic ones, but no firm programme had yet been agreed.

On the whole it was considered that the meeting gave a useful opportunity for the Society to get its views across and the Chairman thanked the Minister and his staff for finding time to meet the delegation.

## Mysterious wall of silence

Considering the serious environmental and road safety problems that will occur if 4 million tonnes of scrap metal travels by road, instead of rail, in the 1980s a mysterious wall of silence seems to prevail about obtaining a solution to the matter.

In East Anglia alone there are 7 depots belonging to a well-established company - the largest of these is based at Snailwell, near Newmarket. In 1977 a £263,000 Sec.8 Grant was made available to help them increase the capacity of the rail terminal which is off the Bury St. Edmunds to Ely line. When it was announced the D.Tp. said "This grant is being made which will significantly improve the environment by reducing the flow of heavy vehicles between Snailwell and Rotherham, Scunthorpe, Sheffield, Norwich, Sheerness and Shotton."

The firm process scrap by different methods - the 1st being the Shear process. Snailwell is the largest Shear plant in Europe, producing about 200 tons each day in 2 or 3 different qualities. There is also the Lunoi Shear process which produced a specialised sheared scrap suitable for small foundries, and the Fragmentation process, which

is distributed to BSC and foundries on the continent. This process turns out about 11,000 tonnes per five day week and is largely handled through Lowestoft Docks. At present steel going out of the yard is sent whenever possible by rail and Snailwell has its own extensive sidings. This type of operation is similar to others throughout the country and obviously welcomed by RDS and the general public.

We would want to see this method expanded rather than decline. Yet, there is a possibility that in the not too distant future this could happen. The 16 ton mineral wagon fleet is being withdrawn gradually by B.R. and soon there could be none left at all. Prototype wagons of approx. 50 tons have been produced and run experimentally in recent months and the British Scrap Federation are very concerned that no firm decision has been made by those in authority to order these (or any other type of wagon.) B.R. has agreed to reduce the scrapping rate of the current fleet for the time being but the situation could still become very serious in the not too distant future.

Whilst no firm figures are available it is believed that there is a possibility of up to 4m. tonnes of scrap which could be available for moving by rail in the 1980s so the transfer of this traffic to road would create tremendous problems in many ways, (the Editor has already had the experience of car bonnets falling off a heavily laden scrap lorry between Stumps Cross and Newmarket) and the writer has had correspondence with the BSF, private wagon manufacturers, finance houses and British Rail and, whilst they all admit the need for investment in this type of wagon the problem, in a nutshell, is "WHO PAYS?" Meanwhile it is to be hoped that until a decision is made, BR will continue to control their scrapping policy of vacuum and unbraked 16 ton mineral wagons, and the British Steel Corporation deadst from their alleged policy of using them as a form of storage - thus releasing more wagons into the supply cycle.

According to information given us there are ample funds which could be made available for hire, leasing or direct purchase of new rail wagons and this must be pursued for two reasons:-

(1) In view of the environmental and road safety problems and loss of revenue to B.R. it is vital that this traffic be retained on the railways.

(2) A programme for the manufacture of wagons will greatly assist the few remaining private sector builders in this country and provide the necessary injection of work needed in areas of high unemployment.

The Society has therefore issued a press release urging the Government, BR and all parties involved to take URGENT action to finance replacement wagons.

# FREIGHT REPORT

**Italy - Here We Come** - Meadowsfreight and their agents Danzas have recently introduced direct rail groupage services to Italy. 50-ton high capacity ferry wagons are loaded weekly in London & Newbridge. Transit time for the latter to Chiasso is only five days - about the current time taken for United Carriers to deliver a parcel from the Midlands to East Anglia by road!

**America to Europe via Liverpool** - Merseyside County Economic Development Committee have commissioned a report to find ways of ensuring that the Port of Liverpool reaps some benefit from the proposed Channel Tunnel. The preliminary report states "Liverpool is in a perfect position to become Europe's western gateway, with North and Central American traffic being railroaded into the heart of Europe."

**Red Tape to be Cut?** - When the RDS delegation met Kenneth Clarke at the D.Tp. recently, we expressed concern at the very long time that Sec. 8 Grants appeared to be taking to find their way through Parish, District and County Council "red tape" and all the other bureaucracy that seems to exist. We were told that the DoE is trying to expedite planning application procedures, especially in respect of industrial developments.

**SPEEDLINK praised** - Mr Clarke also told the delegation that Speedlink was showing encouraging signs. This has been borne out by recent Speedlink advertisements in the freighting press where Railstore Ltd., Young Transport and Wm. Cory & Son were full of praise for the service. Fast transit times, computerised control, reliable overnight services all drew favourable comment. There is no doubt that SPEEDLINK will play a vital role in the movement of freight in the future.

**CORNISH threat?** - English China Clays, which provide B.R. with 94% of its freight out of Cornwall, may have to transfer its traffic to road if 400 wagons which are 30 years old cannot be replaced. If this traffic is lost to rail there could of course be repercussions to the West Country passenger trains. E.C.C. of course have a large road haulage company within their group (Western Express Haulage) and the position is being monitored closely by the Freight Sub-Committee and our local Representative.

**44% increase at LIFT** - In the first quarter of 1980 Constantine Terminals Ltd., reported a 44% increase in the units handled through its facilities at the London International Freight Terminal (Stratford) as against the corresponding period for 1979.

**Siding Plan Jammed** - Some time ago, Cadbury Schweppes were involved in a planning application which would have entailed the removal of the siding at their Histon Jam/Jelly factory and replacing it with an access road! Histon Parish Council and the RDS East Anglian Branch objected strongly to this via South Cambs. D.C. and the application was subsequently withdrawn. During this year's "marmalade season" more Transfesa wagons than ever before reached the factory carrying oranges direct from the groves in Spain & Sicily. Recent new traffic has included fruit pulp from Italy and glass jars from Rock ware. If the siding had been removed and wagons terminated at Cambridge, then unloaded and carted to Histon for the final part of their journey, one is tempted to think that the traffic may well have soon been lost to rail altogether!

**AMA still doing nothing** - The Association of Metropolitan Authorities study report on the Interface of Road & Rail Freight has still not seen the light of day despite a promised publication date of Autumn 1979.

**RUBBISH** - The joint Greater London Council/London Brick Co., scheme for the conveyance of household rubbish direct from Brentford and Hendon to the worked-out pits at Stewartby in Bedfordshire prompted an Anglia TV documentary which subsequently received favourable comments in the national, local and trade press. BBC subsequently put out a similar news item on the scheme for Appleford in Oxon.

**Glass for Recycling by Rail** - Following news of the success of this type of traffic in West Germany, correspondence has been going on with the glass industry, B.R., L.As., etc., United Glass are investigating this type of traffic at Oxford and Killiebank whilst Rockware have just started to use their Knottingly sidings. A further scheme being monitored is the Norfolk C.C./Redfern one in Norwich which, if successful, may be extended to King's Lynn.

**Coal Traffic Lost to Road** - Up to 3,000 tons of coal previously carried by road from the Woodville Disposal Point, near Swadlingcote in Leicestershire, is now going by rail - much of it to Drakelow Power Station.

**Mud on the Rails** - An unusual traffic for rail is the latest Freightliner contract for carrying mud excavated at Ryder Point, in Derbyshire, which is carried by road (sic) to Freightliner terminals at either Manchester or Derby for rail carriage to Aberdeen. From there the mud is conveyed by FL lorries to the Dresser Mineral Company's Plant at Greenbank for use in North Sea drilling operations and 100 tons will be carried daily for the next two years.

**BREL help BLUE CIRCLE** - British Rail Engineering Ltd., have just been awarded a contract worth nearly £3m. to build 100 cement wagons for Blue Circle Industries. The wagons are the two axle type with a gross laden weight of 51 tonnes with a 37 tonnes payload. This brings to 488 the total no. of wagons ordered from BREL by Blue Circle.

**Another Massive Sec.8 Grant for Scotland** - Roche Products, the Swiss-owned Pharmaceutical company who are building a new £140m. vitamin "C" plant at Dalry in Ayrshire have recently been awarded a Grant of £1.2m. towards the construction of a private siding. The rail link is essential to cope with more than 200,000 tonnes of freight traffic which will be required to keep the plant operating when it is completed next year. The total cost of the Roche sidings and rail link is £2.7m., including a new bridge over the River Garnock and extensive handling facilities to cope with coal from a local pit and also chemicals, including caustic soda and sulphuric acid.

### **Energy for future transport** - Francis Wayne

In a careful, orderly and very readable analysis of the problem of diminishing oil reserves and the need for research and investment in alternative sources of energy, Francis Wayne surveys all known aspects and options before homing in convincingly on the urgency of electrifying and expanding our rail network.

"It is most important - he writes - that the problem should be tackled now! Too much complacency has been generated by hopes that an unpleasant dilemma will go away, or that some new technical miracle will save us."

Along with many other supposed solutions to the problem he deals with one in which the Director General of the A.A. recently placed his faith - liquid fuel from coal - but he shows that any large scale use of "syncrude" would put an almost intolerable strain on the world's coal industry; on world reserves of coal; on the availability of capital; on other coal based industries and "on the pockets of any consumer of syncrude" (having regard to the various interactions the price at the pump of which would be at least £5 a gallon.)

RDS members will, I am sure agree with Mr Wayne's basic conclusions and will find this book (with its extensive and meaty appendices) full of useful ammunition in arguing the pro-rail case.

The booklet has 80 pages, costs £1.75 and is obtainable from the Scottish Association for Public Transport:- 113, West Regent Street, Glasgow, G2 2RU

T.J.G.

# REGIONAL NOTES

## LONDON & HOME COUNTIES

Much has happened since our last report. Not the least is the mounting opposition to the withdrawal of rail passenger services, by LT., between Epping & Ongar. Once more the campaign is being spearheaded by battling schoolmaster, Ron Barnes of Ongar. The Branch has lodged a formal objection and set up a Sub-Committee, including Vice-Chairman, Dr. M.P.L.Caton and Dr Frank Tomlins of Chingford who has been attending the regular meetings of the Epping Central Line Users' Committee. History will repeat itself on 16th September when Mr Barnes hopes to fill the hall of Great Stoney School, in Ongar, for a campaign meeting. So strong has been the opposition that L.T. may have to postpone the closure until a Public Inquiry has been held.

On the recently modernised and extended "Linkline" (Camden Road - North Woolwich) Questionnaires have been sent out to nearly 100 local employers, tenants' groups and other local organisations and by the time members receive this report the results of the Survey of Local Opinion should have been published or be nearing completion.

Whilst the Ashford - Hastings line has not received much attention since the beginning of the year consideration is being given to a further Survey of Local Opinion - similar to that described above - also with a view to the formation of a local Rail Users' Group. In the meantime Lydd Town Council has sent out 1,000 Questionnaires to local interests to canvass support for the restoration of a passenger service over the freight-only line from Appledore which at present appears to be used only for the conveyance of nuclear waste from the power station complex at Dungeness.

Other projects on which the Branch has been working include the submission of observations on the Monopolies Commission Investigation into London & South East Commuter services and the report on "Transport Alternatives to the Jubilee Line in Docklands". The Branch also mounted a publicity stand on behalf of the Society at the Inland Waterways National Festival held at Lea Bridge on Saturday and Sunday 16/17th August, which was well supported by members - including one from East Anglia.

The Branch has firmly endorsed the stand taken by our member David Ogilvy of Garston, against the conversion of the Watford - St. Albans line into a "Busway", which may also lead to the formation of a local users group for the lines in the area - including those to Watford (Met.) and to Croxley Green.

Chief amongst the Cross-London services being considered by the Rail Development Sub-Committee is that from Clapham Junction to Willesden Junction (via the West London Line) and by the Autumn it is proposed to present specific proposals for discussion with the North London Line Committee whose own campaign is being concentrated on the "City Link" between Broad Street and Canonbury, including a new interchange station with "Linkline" at Dalston and the re-opening of stations at Haggerston and Shoreditch Church.

## WEST MIDLANDS

Coventry City Council has been actively seeking the re-opening of the Nuneaton - Coventry freight-only line. This follows a busy urban corridor and links 3 rail routes at both ends. The Euston - Birmingham semi-fast EMU service has since May, been speeded up and a separate all-stations New Street - Coventry service is now provided.

The extra trains to Alvechurch and Redditch, as an extension of the Longbridge service, introduced from 12th May, have led to a steady increase in off-peak loadings. A Redditch & Alvechurch Rail Users' Association has also been set up and issued its first Newsletter "The Arrow Express" in August, urging its members to "Do Someone a Favour" and help a friend save money by urging them to "Try the Train!" The Association can be contacted at:-  
218, Foxlydiate Crescent, Redditch, B97.

Commuters in the West Midlands now have their "Travelcards" extended to cover all rail lines (as well as all buses) for £12.50 per 4 weeks or £36.00 for 13 weeks. Whilst an extension is to be built to the car park at Shirley a new one is planned for Chester Road (Erdington)

## EAST ANGLIA

Trips to the coast have proved to be popular, judging from the success of three special trains chartered by RDS and its associated local Groups this Summer. A 5 car DMU chartered to run from Sudbury to Sheringham on 29th June carried nearly 300 passengers whilst the 5 car special from Dereham to Sheringham on 27th July was also fully patronised. The freight-only Wroxham - Lenwade line saw its longest train so far from local people when our 6 car DMU ran from Reepham to Yarmouth on 13th July. Not only were passengers picked up from Reepham and Aylsham, as on previous occasions, but also for the first time since closure in 1952 from Cawston, Buxton and Coltishall.

The Branch has been following with interest the recent trials of the Leyland Experimental Vehicle (LEV) which took place on the East Suffolk Line in June.

LEV is due to return in the Autumn and make passenger carrying runs between Ipswich and Lowestoft as extra to timetabled trains.

Residents of Fornsett (between Norwich and Diss) and also at Bealings (between Ipswich and Woodbridge) are both mounting campaigns for the re-opening of their respective stations. RDS is also liaising with the residents of Trimley (a village near Felixstowe) who are concerned about plans to build a new rail link from their village (on the Ipswich - Felixstowe line) to the northern extension of Felixstowe Docks. RDS supports the need for this new line but hopes that a route can be decided upon which will satisfy both the villagers and the Dock Company.

Fakenham railhead was due to be closed on 3rd August despite efforts by the NUR and RDS to keep it open. We even offered to pay the £260 in annual maintenance costs which B.R. claim it will save by closing the 2½ mile line. The Branch has lodged an objection to the latest Ipswich By-Pass proposals and has persuaded the Inspector to hold some evening sittings of the Public Inquiry, due to start in September.

In the West the Branch has also launched a petition calling for an up to date feasibility study to be carried out into the restoration of passenger services between Cambridge and St. Ives and between March and Wisbech, and has lodged an objection to the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan in which it is considered these matters have not been dealt with adequately.

## YORKSHIRE

Fourteen years after being closed to passengers the station at Dronfield, on the Sheffield - Chesterfield line is to be re-opened. Financial support, amounting to £90,000 is to be provided for 3 years by Derbyshire County Council and North Derbyshire D.C. The re-opening had been agreed six months ago but hung fire as S.Yorks. P.T.E. had "no money to spare." There will be 3 trains in both directions during the morning and evening rush hours and a special "shoppers'" service on Saturdays. A car park will be built at the station and bus services will be re-routed to give a feeder service from housing estates.

The RDS Yorkshire Branch is pressing for a direct train service between Bradford and Sheffield via Halifax and Huddersfield, involving the re-opening of the stations at Elland and Brighouse. This line which is threatened with closure could form a vital link between the Bradford area and the Midlands. Bradford Council has expressed an interest in the idea and both Calderdale

and Kirklees Councils are in favour. The matter now rests with the West and South Yorkshire P.T.Es.

The Secretary of State's decision on the West Yorks. Structure Plan has been published. It contains little in the way of proposals regarding rail transport in West Yorkshire other than to say that disused railway formations will be safeguarded where appropriate. Provision is however made for 10 major road schemes including the Kirkham to Dishforth road, the Airedale trunk road and the spine road in Bradford. On the other hand some 36 schemes for by-passes, road widening, and new roads are abandoned.

A contract has been awarded for the £30 million construction of the East Coast Main Line diversion around the west side of the new Selby Coalfield. The new 14½ mile line will replace the existing route which is being undermined. The contract is due to be completed in December 1982 and includes the building of 12 new bridges.

## NORTH EAST ENGLAND

The Tyne & Wear P.T.E. Metro system opened to the public on Monday 11th August despite some earlier manning problems and a strike by contractors. The initial Metro services will run from Newcastle (Haymarket) to Tynemouth via Benton, and to Kenton Bank Foot. This will result in the withdrawal of the B.R. service between Newcastle and Tynemouth via Wallsend with replacement rail-link buses being provided; meaning that B.R. will cease to operate on any part of the North Tyneside Loop. The P.T.E. admit that they anticipate breakdowns in the early stages until staff gain experience.

Efforts to restore the long withdrawn service from Newcastle to Ashington and Consett continue to be made, but in both cases the Councils are unhappy about the financial burden that B.R. is likely to place on them in return for the provision of a service.

Although manning levels have been cut B.R. has promised that the Tyneside freight yard at Lamesley will not be axed. There are plans for an opencast coal site at Plennellier Common, near Haltwhistle. The main fear about these workings is over the transport of coal by road but the N.C.B. have said they will shift it by a 2 mile conveyor to a rail loading point on the former Haltwhistle - Alston Branch a mile of which will have to be restored.

## NORTH WEST ENGLAND

On 19th April 1980 the "Guardian" disclosed that up to 15 rural railways would have to be closed. One of these was the branch from the West Coast Main Line at Ox-

enholme to Windermere. However any reader who has used this line in the season will know how busy it can get and overcrowding on the DMU is not uncommon. Sir Peter Parker on a recent visit to the line spoke not of its closure but of electrification and of through trains from Euston to Windermere. Both he and Cumbria County Council recognise the role that this surviving Lakeland branch can play in relieving the present traffic congestion in this area.

A local Action Group has recently been set up at Carnforth and is now concentrating on the need to get the main line platforms at the station restored. The Group has been given a quote of £40,000 for the construction of a platform suitable for a 4 car DMU. At present there are 3 down and 4 up trains to and from Windermere passing through and the Group is aiming for an hourly service from Lancaster to Windermere.

Last year was a good one for local train services in this area. Traffic on the Fylde line rose by 6%; on the East Lancs. Line by 10% and on the Furness Line by 4%. STELLA (Support the East Lancs. Line Assn.) is planning to adopt Colne Station. Anyone who has used it will realise why! The bare platform with a single bus shelter in an area of waste land is not the best image to give to the travelling public. In the meantime the Shaw - Rochdale line has been singled to reduce its operating and maintenance costs.

The Summer dated Rock Ferry - Chester fast trains reported in our last issue and timetabled to start on 12th July have been cancelled due to the PTE refusing to bear the cost as they would not stop at Merseyside stations, even though their main purpose was to relieve overcrowding by trippers on the PTE stopping trains. Merseyside Council has, however, approved the extension of 3rd rail electrification from Garston to Hunts Cross plus a short electrification from this extension into Allerton Depot which from next year is to undertake all wheel turning on Merseyrail electric stock.

"Bonanza Time on the Buses and Trains!" headlined the "Liverpool Echo" recently. "People are leaving their cars at home and flocking back to the buses and trains." With the help of this extra income it is hoped to hold October's fare increase to not more than the increase in earnings of say 16%. Passenger traffic on the Kirby line since electrification has risen by 370% and on the Garston line by a staggering 540% over the 1970s diesel services.

Merseyside is nevertheless thought to be planning some rail economies from October by reducing the peak time frequencies to Southport; reducing evening and some Sunday services and fewer 6 car train to the Wirral.

At Chester work has started on a £6m. scheme to modernise the track layout and signalling. A new power box is due to operate from 1983 replacing nine manual boxes and will control from Mold Junction to Mickle Trafford and to Green Lane on the Wrexham Line. Headways will then be reduced by a half and all platforms will be bi-directional. On the Trans-Pennines the loco-hauled trains are keeping good times and the electrically hauled freights are now operating into Trafford Park, Manchester, thus dispensing with the need for loco changes at Longsight.

## EAST MIDLANDS

New to the B.R. Timetable is a B.R. liveried road coach linking Kettering - Corby - Oundle - Peterborough designed to generate additional rail business between the two main lines. Meanwhile to the South work on the £120m. electrification of the 50 mile Bedford - St. Pancras - Moorgate line is well on target for completion in 1982. The former "widened lines" to Moorgate which are to have concrete slab track will be renamed the "Midland City Line" and open in 1982, with the St. Pancras service commencing in October 1982. Production of the 48 new 4-car class 317 EMUs is to start in September at York and Derby and these trains will have power-operated sliding doors, pressure ventilation and air suspension. A new traction and maintenance depot is being provided at Cricklewood with new stabling for EMUs at Bedford. The new power signal box at West Hampstead will cover the whole route, and the Bedford - Luton section will be energised in 1981 for driver training and staff familiarisation.

One may well ask what this has got to do with the East Midlands but with the Government's announcement on the B.R. Electrification Programme expected in the near future it would not be too difficult to see the continuation of this scheme to Leicester or even right through to Sheffield. Run as it is at the moment with some trains calling at Derby and others at Nottingham it would certainly lend itself to this type of operation although whether the awkward reversal necessary at Nottingham could justify the use of EMU stock is open to doubt on what is in effect an Inter-city Main Line service. Meanwhile a new RDS Group in Leicestershire has increased its membership and is holding a full meeting to plan activities.

## LINCOLNSHIRE

In this area our Corporate Member the Grimsby - Louth Rail Group chartered a 5-car DMU on Sunday 29th June to run from Louth to Keighley - the second special they have run on the line which they are campaigning to have restored.

Nearly 300 passengers were carried and tribute was paid to B.R. for the efficient running of the train. For the first time since closure in 1970 passengers were also picked up at the intermediate stations of North Thoresby and New Waltham - both of which had been tidied up by members of GLRG.

## WALES

Prompted, no doubt by the latest threat to the line, the activities of the Cambrian Coast Line Action Group are to the fore. This time the problem is not a man made one and concerns the viaduct over Afon Mawddach, at Barmouth, which has suffered serious damage from the Teredo worm which has attacked the wooden piles. The 2,253 foot long viaduct, which carries a single line and a public footpath over the estuary was built in 1867 and is made of 113 spans of timber and four of steel. Recently the tiny marine worms have bored into the 1'0" thick pine timbers seriously reducing their strength to the extent that £2.5m. of repair will be necessary.

Sir Peter Parker, who has visited the viaduct says "There is no way B.R. can find this amount of money from our own limited resources. We shall therefore be seeking assistance from the Welsh Office, Local Authorities and perhaps even the E.E.C." The line to Pwllheli is now temporarily closed to locomotives including the freight working and the planned extension of the Cambrian Coast Express, with even DMUs restricted to 10 M.P.H. over the viaduct.

Nevertheless the Action Group in its latest 44 page magazine entitled "Cambrian Coast Express" (Summer 1980) claims to be the only Group which campaigns for the retention and development of the Welsh Railway Network and the full coverage of its Journal adds credence to this. Amongst the principal items it covers is the recent statement by Sir Peter Parker that unless the Government gives more financial aid B.R. may not be able to meet the full potential of an expanding market. Speaking after a 3 day tour of Mid and North Wales he said "I have never been more confident about the future of railways since I came to the job." Asked if the line was in danger because of the works necessary to the viaduct he replied "If you are in the middle of a battle you don't think about retreat. I am not lacking in confidence to think that a solution will be found to the problem."

Both R.I.S. and R.D.A. have been active supporters of C.C.L.A.G. since its formation in 1971 and we hope they will succeed in finding a new and active Secretary at their A.G.M. to be held in Barmouth on 13th September.

The present Secretary of the Group is:- Howel James, Trem Hyfryd, Harlech, Gwynedd.

## SOUTH WEST ENGLAND

The Penzance main line services have been well enhanced by the H.S.Ts but the single line sections near Liskeard and Saltash still cause unacceptable delays. However the stock shortage has caused conventional trains to be substituted for HSTs on the 10.00 Plymouth - Paddington and the 16.25 return. This Summer's train services on the 3½ mile branch from St Erth have attracted much patronage particularly between Lelant "Park & Ride" station and St. Ives. The 6-car cross-country trains shuttle along the branch every half hour and hug the cliffs along this beautiful coastline.

Extensive station improvements have been completed at Teignmouth and part of the cost has been met by Devon County Council. The £65,000 reconstruction provides for a new ticket office, entrance hall and waiting area with radar controlled automatic sliding doors. Devon County Council has also contributed £30,000 to expenditure on station improvements on the Exeter - Barnstaple line. To help promote this line a colour brochure has been issued, jointly by B.R., the West Country Tourist Board and the North Devon Railway Development Group. This Group held its Second A.G.M. in Barnstaple on 4th June when it was addressed by the W.R. Chief Passenger Manager. They are at present pursuing improved connections at Exeter, more freight to the Barnstaple line and urging the re-opening of Bideford Station.

The Waterloo - Exeter services got off to a bad start with a derailment west of Salisbury and several of the Class 50 Locomotives failing. The less powerful Class 33s resumed duties on several occasions. The Saturday Brighton - Exeter train has a turn-round time of only 25 minutes and at least once a spare set has had to be used due to the very late running of the down train.

As a step towards the running of a regular public railway service on the Isle of Purbeck the Swanage Rly. Co., is extending its track to Herston where a new halt is being erected for regular services. The Company, which runs a steam loco burning waste oil (? from the local well Ed.) eventually hopes to operate the 11 mile route to Wareham.

## SCOTLAND

At Aberdeen work is about to start on a £12.5m. development of a new shopping precinct to be provided on a raft above the rail station. At the same time the latter will be improved and the track layout altered.

## R.D.S. DIARY

### OCTOBER

- 18th - The Midlands Branch A.G.M. to be held at 2.0.p.m. at Dr Johnson House, Bull St., BIRMINGHAM, will be followed by a talk and a film by the Deputy Divisional Manager of B.R. entitled "A Cost Effective Railway" (members in the area will already have been sent details but others will be very welcome) Further information from Branch Secretary (A. Bevan) (address overleaf)

- 25th - A further National Conference of Rail Users' Groups is to be held by the Society at the Queen's Hall, DERBY, between 11.00 and 17.00 with an hour for lunch.

The main aims of the Conference, which has been organised by popular request, are:-

(a) to enable those groups who attended the earlier Conference (and hopefully others who were unable to be represented) to continue the dialogue on matters of mutual interest.

(b) to discuss the future prospects in the light of the Society's recent meeting with the Minister,

(c) to discuss other matters concerning the likely threat to or measures to provide for the more economical operation and promotion of local lines.

and it is hoped that as many Groups as possible will be able to be represented.

If you have not already done so, book NOW with the Conference Secretary, T.J. Garrod, 15, Clapham Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1RQ

- 1st - A Joint Meeting is to be held in MANCHESTER, with the National Council on Inland Transport, to protest against the closure of the Manchester - Sheffield (via Woodhead) line, similar to that held in Sheffield in November of last year.

Further details from the Chairman (Mr Banks) address overleaf) who will send a meeting notice as soon as they are available. (s.a.e. appreciated)

### NOVEMBER

- 6th - A Conference to formulate a National Policy for the re-opening of closed lines where local demand exists will be held at the Bull Hotel, PETERBOROUGH, from 12 noon. Further details from T.J. Garrod:- (address above)

### DECEMBER

# RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT NEWS

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WEDNESDAY 12th NOVEMBER.