

# A big welcome RUG

Euro-MP Brian Simpson will be setting British rail issues in their European context when he addresses the National Conference of Rail Users on 2 November, taking place this year in Birmingham's Dr Johnson House. There will also be workshop sessions based on the activities of the RDS passenger committee as well as ideas for political lobbying. The one-day

conference will be held between 11am and 4.30pm.

If you would like to attend, the fee is only £3.50 (plus £4 if you would like a buffet lunch) and should be sent to conference secretary John Jackson, 37 Cromwell Road, Devizes, Wilts SN10 3EN. Make cheques payable to the Railway Development Society.

**Banned:** A pack of three leaflets describing a series of rail and ride trips in East Suffolk and East Norfolk has been banned from display at BR stations by local management.

They can be obtained in return for an sse from general secretary Trevor Garrod (address back page).

**I'll take the rail line:** Scottish Highland Hotels are to consider including rail information in their brochures after a "courteous" approach by RDS member G F Manley of Putney Hill, London, who was surprised to find when he visited the Alexandra Hotel in Oban that rail travellers were ignored in the hotel group's publicity booklet.

**Rail lobby:** RDS has three members who try to maintain contact with the political parties. They will be keen to hear from others who can help. Our "rail lobby" co-ordinators are Peter Wood, 24 Lutterworth Road, Sunderland SR2 9AX (tel: 091 5226036) for the Conservatives, Dave Finch, 28 Neville Avenue, Kidderminster, Worcs DY11 7AL (tel: 0562 746664) for Labour and Malcolm Jevons, 41 Adwick Road, Mexborough, Yorks S64 0AB (tel: 0709 583589) for the Liberal Democrats.

**Ride on:** For the ninth year running, RDS members joined up for a sponsored cycle ride. This year they rode to Ashby-de-la-Zouch to publicise the planned reopening of the line from Leicester to Burton.

Trevor Garrod, Clara Zilahi, Simon Hartropp, Bill Collins, Jason Berryman and Mr Bailey rode to Ashby to meet the mayor, Mrs Carol Schofield, outside the old station and to see the site for a new one. Local Press and radio interviewed the riders.

So far £388 has been raised from sponsors of the riders, half of which is going to the Rail Defence Fund. £77 has also been sent to the Raynaud's and Scleroderma Association (to help medical research). We are already thinking about next year's ride, perhaps in an area a little flatter than

## NEWSWATCH

Leicestershire! Send your suggestions to general secretary Trevor Garrod (address back page)

**Cycle back:** Locomotive-hauled trains were reinstated on some popular tourist routes in Scotland over the summer, partly to accommodate cyclists. ScotRail reversed its ban on cycles after an angry four-week campaign of protest.

**Classless Britain:** Paris has abolished first class seats on the Metro in the same year that "classless Britain" introduced them on Thameslink.

**Poison:** It is becoming increasingly difficult to recycle cars as makers switch to more plastic parts. A scrap car can now be classified as toxic waste because it contains polychlorinated biphenols (PCBs), heavy metals and hydrocarbons.

**Midland magic:** Birmingham and the West Midlands is the largest conurbation in western Europe without an underground or light rail system. People there can see the benefits that systems similar to the Midland Metro project have brought to over 200 cities throughout Europe and north America. Twenty eight free car parks are already provided at rail stations in the West Midlands in an attempt to encourage drivers to use trains. It is estimated that every day 11,000 car journeys will be prevented as drivers transfer to Midland Metro. In a year, that adds up to 3.3 million car journeys prevented.

**Open up:** West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive has backed an £800,000 proposal to bring back passenger trains between Huddersfield and Halifax. New stations would be built at Elland and Brighouse.

**Coming to the aid of one party:** Tarmac gave £50,000 to the Tory Party in 1989-90, according to Transport Review. Hanson gave £80,000, Lucas £25,000 and GKN £25,000.

**Snub:** Transport Secretary Malcolm Rifkind refused to meet an all-party delegation of Hackney MPs and councillors who wanted to argue the case for a Chelsea — Hackney Tube line to be built. Mr Rifkind said there was not much purpose in meeting the group.

# Where

While our myopic Government and BR were putting their heads together to shunt wagonload traffic out of Britain, by closing Speedlink, the well-organised and successful Swiss were showing how things should be done.

They are EXPANDING their rail freight operations by opening a new door-to-door service for part-wagon and part-train loads. Swiss railways already operate a Speedlink type service from 4,000 private sidings as well as block trains, containers and intermodal traffic of every kind, including trans-Alpine car and lorry carriers.

The new Cargo X experiment is based on privately operated rail depots at Zurich, Bern and Lausanne but a further 16 terminals will be provided if the commercial trials are successful.

The idea is to provide a near-continuous cargo flow and to reduce the road leg of any journey as much as possible, sometimes leaving the lorry to travel only six miles.

Switzerland already restricts lorries to a maximum of 28 tonnes (compared with Britain's 38 tonnes and the European Community's preferred and anti-social 40-tonnes) and to 7ft 6in wide while also banning lorries completely on Sundays.

As a result rail is an economically viable alternative to road for journeys as short as 60 miles. In Britain BR says it is 250 miles. There are few restrictions on lorries in Britain even though most people would like there to be.

The dice are so loaded against rail in this country that Road Haulage Association director Bryan Colley could dismiss Transport Secretary Malcolm Rifkind's much-vaunted call for rail to take a bigger share.

As the Speedlink service was closing, Mr Colley was able to boast: "Wagonload traffic has been seen to be unprofitable and clearly it will need more than a one-time construction grant to persuade hauliers and distribution firms to invest in new rail-served freight centres."

Swiss Railways meanwhile are hoping that Cargo X will be so successful they will be able to extend it throughout Europe.

Despite being threatened by the European Community, Switzerland's Alpine neighbour Austria is also determined to give its people and forests protection from juggernauts. It has already succeeded in reducing lorry traffic by 210,000 vehicles between 1989 and 1990 by encouraging them to go piggy-back on trains.

Even the EC recognises that transport congestion is likely to be at crisis point by 2000.

And Italy, after ugly border confrontations which saw drivers and haulage companies conspire to get their own way by breaking the law, has decided to do the sensible thing and give extra tax incentives to encourage freight to go by rail.

One major step forward took place in June when EC transport ministers approved the idea of British and European trains being able to use the tracks throughout Europe for intermodal traffic. It should open the way for private enterprise to get more involved in using rail. The European Commission says it wants rail track opened up to ALL types of traffic by next year.

**Up in the air:** A 12-mile light rail link is being built from Munich to the new Franz Josef Strauss airport which opens in May next year. £94 million is also being spent to build a

## Winners all the way with RDS

Thanks to all those who helped to make the national draw a success. The winners were: £450 H Longbottom, Leeds; £50 P H English, Stranraer; £100 J C Baker, Seer Green; book vouchers J M S Clarke, London SE15; Karen Ward, Nottingham; J Fulton, Glasgow; F Corser, Orkney; J W Page, Cambridge; Jim Woodcock, Manchester; J Knott, Ilkley; M Poole, Lichfield; S M Ramsay, Malvern.

The national executive was considering which campaigns should be boosted by the cash raised and was expected to make a decision in September. One of the beneficiaries could be the North Wales line to Holyhead.

**Win with us:** Why don't you join the RDS monthly lottery, and help the society at the same time. Half the money raised goes to RDS campaigning. It costs just £1 per month and most people join for three months or a year at a time. Entry forms are available from Dave Finch, 28 Neville Avenue, Kidderminster, Worcs DY11 7AL.

**Winners for July:** Douglas Smart, Edinburgh £38.20, Derek English, Poole £23.87, J D Shemilt, Ashbourne £14.33, T M Hounslow, Watford £9.54, R J Worthington, Stalybridge £4.78, H R Mills, Cheshunt £4.78.

**June:** Edina Lewis, London £38.20, A J Macbeach, Grange over Sands £23.87, Elisabeth Jordan, Corby £14.33, P Hamlyn, London £9.54, J G Willis, East Barnet £4.78, R Neville, Cardiff £4.78.

**May:** Mrs Gladys Gow, Uckfield £37.60, E J Partington, Stourbridge £23.50, Geoffrey Sutcliffe, Bradford £14.10, C W A Goodings, Wymondham £9.40, R H Gibson, Huntingdon £4.70, N Lander, Pershore £4.70.

**April:** Paul Keepin, Wisbech £36.80, Michael Gooder, Reading £23, K C Burton, Thetford £13.80, R King, London E9 £9.20, A L Reid, Edinburgh £4.60, Anthony Emmerson, Belfast £4.60.

**March:** D J Barr, Harrogate £44.50, David Stocks, Sheffield £22.26, Mr and Mrs S L Haynes, Axminster £11.12, Joan Rustrick, Whitehaven £11.12.

**February:** Miss J Horrihan, Southsea £45.75, J C Hancock, Derby £22.87, Mrs E Demain, Keswick £11.44, Roger Dewhurst, Southampton £11.44.