

East Anglia

By Nick Dibben and Trevor Garrod

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■ ■ Station count at Meldreth

Branch members have carried out a station count at Meldreth station on the line between Cambridge and Royston. The extensive train service meant we were at the station from 06.00 to 01.17 the following morning! A total of 737 station users were counted, far higher than the usage suggested by ORR figures. We also noted a large number of users with bikes. The data have been sent on to train operator First Capital Connect and Cambridgeshire County Council with suggestions on ways to improve the station facilities and local signage.

■ ■ We need more trains!

Recent presentations at Branch meetings by East Midlands Trains and Arriva CrossCountry have highlighted the urgent need for extra coaches to be provided on inter-regional services from East Anglia.

Both train operators note that many services suffer from overcrowding, but there are no plans to provide extra stock as the Government is unwilling to pay for them. They feel there is great untapped demand for train travel but are unable to promote services due to the lack of seats. The branch has urged the Government to deal with this situation and allow more trains to be ordered.

■ ■ Ipswich station lift in 2009

When the main line was electrified in 1987, the passenger lift and its connected footbridge at Ipswich station were demolished and not replaced.

Railfuture and local rail users' associations have campaigned for many years for a new lift, especially as station usage has increased. The lift will benefit not only disabled passengers but also those struggling with luggage over the existing footbridge.

Network Rail has now programmed in the lift for summer 2009 – and so local users were amazed to learn in late summer that Ipswich Borough Council officers had recommended against the plans because they did not “sit well with the heritage nature of the station.”

Describing this as “snatching defeat from the jaws of victory”, East Suffolk Travellers' Association chairman Trevor Garrod wrote to the local press, pointing out that, while Ipswich station is indeed a building of character, it is not a museum. ESTA secretary Rod Lock also wrote to the council, protesting about its recommendation and was interviewed on local radio.

We have now been assured that discussions are taking place between Network Rail and the council, and that revised plans are due to be submitted. Network Rail still hopes to start work on the lift in the summer.

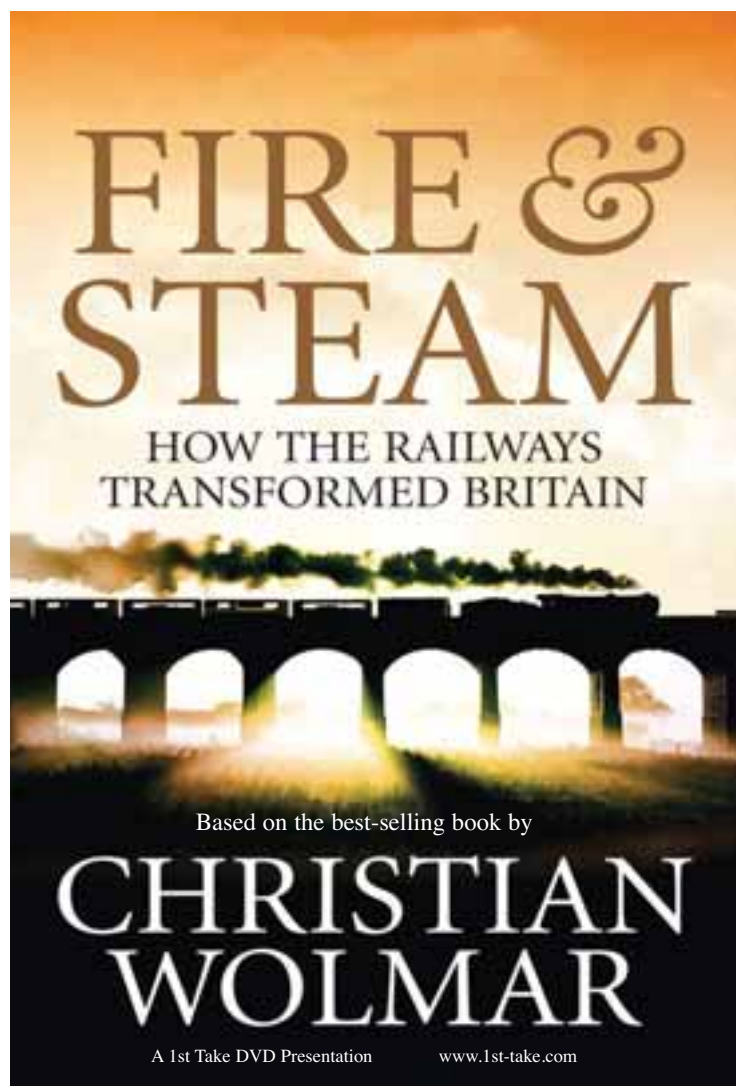
■ ■ Lowestoft station

The Department for Transport recently launched a consultation exercise on proposals to make it easier to close such stations as Lowestoft, cut back the track and build a new station 400 yards inland.

Both ESTA and Railfuture have responded to the consultation, on “Minor Modifications” to the 2005 Railways Act, objecting to any moves to water down the existing rights of users to make objections to such a closure.

The consultation paper talks about how many people may live within 800 yards of a relocated station. It says nothing about ease of interchange or about the needs of visitors using the station.

Meanwhile, Railfuture has agreed to make a grant to ESTA out of the Rail Defence Fund to help the association conduct a survey of passengers. It is planned to do the survey for one week in winter and one week in the summer. If you could help for a day or longer please contact Rod Lock, ESTA Secretary, The Beehive, Hall Road, Oulton Broad, Lowestoft NR32 3AW.



A fascinating and lively account of how the railways changed Britain forever is presented in this DVD by leading railway writer Christian Wolmar.

The DVD is based on his best-selling book of the same title and includes dramatic location film from all over Britain.

There is the picturesque Settle-Carlisle line, the elegant Forth Bridge, the site of the world's first railway station and London's teeming commuter network.

Thanks to the railways, fish and chips became the national dish and league football the national game.

Such dramatic changes are key to the story, which begins at the world's first passenger railway, the Liverpool and Manchester, and concludes with the high-speed train on the Eurostar line in Kent.

Enhanced by rare archive film and evocative historic images, and

boosted throughout by Christian Wolmar's enthusiastic presentation, this DVD – produced by 1st Take's Dave Rogers – is essential viewing for anyone interested in the railways or the history of modern Britain.

Mr Rogers said: “In order to do justice to this fascinating story, we travelled over 3,000 miles from Scotland to the south-west of England, to film at many of the key locations in railway history, and we are confident that the resulting film will be widely enjoyed.”

The DVD is available for £14.95 plus £1 p & p direct from 1st Take, PO Box 1840, Yate, Bristol BS37 4WB. www.1st-take.com email: sales@1st-take.com Tel: 01454 321614

It will also be on sale for £14.95 at many outlets throughout the country, including preserved railways, museums and bookshops.

Roll up for the Railfuture Lottery

There are six prizes each month and half of the money raised is returned in prizes while the remainder goes into Railfuture funds to help our campaigns. So you can help us and help yourself by joining the Lottery. It costs just £1 per entry per month and you can get more details by writing to Railfuture Lottery, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingsstone, Suffolk, IP9 2ND, or email lottery@railfuture.org.uk.

Recent prize winners are: October, Robert Burrows, Roger Blake, Edward Potter, Alan Boulwood, Timothy Fearon and Cedric Martindale. November, Alexander Robson, Alexander Sinclair Macfie, Peter Jacobs, Bill Berridge, Bill Stoneham and Christopher Harley.