

RAIL TUNNEL — THE RIGHT DECISION

After the best part of a century of procrastination and false starts it now looks as though a fixed Channel crossing may actually be built; proposals promoting the various schemes are in the hands of the Government — whose decision whether or not to proceed, and by which method, was due to be made by the end of January.

Our opinion, any Channel Link must meet two criteria: it must contain a rail link and it must be a tunnel.

The maintenance cost of a bridge, let alone its capital cost and completion time, will be greater than that of a tunnel — and its life expectancy will be less. Any open structure will be subject to closure during high winds (cf. the Severn Bridge), fog (cf. any motorway), and shipping accidents (cf. the Humber Estuary). The chances of accidents occurring on a road crossing are, according to present statistics for road and rail, far greater than for a rail link — it is well known that rail is inherently safer than road.

Critics of a rail tunnel cite three main arguments: the possibility of the tunnel being closed by industrial action, the possibility of some form of attack by terrorists and the possibility of rabies being brought through the tunnel to Britain by animals. Furthermore environmentalists in Kent oppose the tunnel on the grounds that road or rail works, together with, loading and unloading facilities would cause severe environmental damage in that county. These arguments can all be refuted.

Ferries and motorways are no less subject to industrial action than railways, despite what some sections of the

press would have us believe. European motorways have been blocked by lorry drivers taking industrial action. Any form of transport is, unfortunately, fair game for terrorists nowadays; better security everywhere is the only answer. A tunnel can be built with defences, such as deep pits, which prevent the spread of animals, and hence rabies, through it. Furthermore, rats HAVE been known to inhabit ships and people HAVE been known to smuggle pets ashore from private yachts. If rabies does come to Britain, it will probably be sea-borne.

We would wish to impress upon environmentalists that a rail tunnel, particularly a rail-only tunnel with provision for carriage of passengers, freight, and containers, together with cars and lorries on smallwheeled low-loading bogie wagons (which ARE technically feasible and are, in fact, already in use on the continent) would enable through traffic to reach all parts of the country without the need for environmentally objectionable terminal and exchange facilities in rural Kent.

These are the main points in favour of a rail tunnel, and there are many more. It is ironic that, if the decision to go ahead with a rail tunnel is made, this may well be due more to pressure by the French Government than to any economically and environmentally sensible decision by our own government, the head of which, apparently, favours a road crossing. A decision to build a rail tunnel will be welcome, but the fact that this decision has not been regarded as automatic demonstrates the power of those forces acting against railway development in Britain.

KW.

All Hands to the rescue of Balloch Pier!

Never in living memory have the railways in Scotland been under such resourceful, positive and enterprising management as at present — but, such are the pressures placed on this management by negative thinkers in positions of influence, instances of "cut off your nose to spite your face" still occur. The proposal to close Balloch Pier station is one such case.

Over the years, apathy by both local public and management (of both the railway and the Loch Lomond steamer service — formerly under unified administration but now unwisely separated) have been mutually reinforcing. The service (under arrangements with Strathclyde PTE) has been whittled down to a couple of trains a day during only a couple of months of the year.

On 5th October last, however, a chartered train from Sunderland brought 450 customers of our friends, South Tyneside Travel, and paved the way to a possible new future for Balloch Pier. You don't need to be an actuary to see that, if all the people living within 5 hours train journey from Balloch Pier paid no more than one visit to Loch Lomond in their lives, there would be enough passengers to keep it, and the Loch Lomond steamer, busy for a large part of the year.

We RDS members in Scotland urgently need the help of those in England in convincing hard-headed Strathclyde councillors that a chord of poetry in the English heart is waiting to be stirred by rail trips to Loch Lomond. English RDS, please wake up and help us! (our address is: Top Right, 113, West Regent Street, Glasgow, G2 2RU.)

Frank Neville

CONGRATULATIONS

To David Rayner, on his appointment as General Manager, B.R., Eastern Region.,

To Theo Steel, on his appointment as Asst. General Manager, B.R. (Eastern).,

To Chris Green, on his appointment as Sector Director, B.R. London & South East,

and to RDS Member, Michael Palin, on his appointment as Chairman of Transport 2000.

Sales Officer

Following the advert in the last issue of RAILWATCH we are pleased to announce that the National Executive at its meeting on 4th January confirmed the appointment of Mr Geoffrey Kent, whose address is: 35a Clarendon Road, Luton, Beds. LU2 7PQ.

Stocks of RDS publications and literature are in his possession and telephone enquiries should be made to 0582 458159.

(Since Mr Neville submitted this article the TUCC for Scotland submitted its conclusions to the Secretary of State. It ventured the opinion that, were the Balloch Pier connection to be kept, use of it would be unlikely to increase. Mr Neville wrote to the Secretary of State in December expressing the opposite view and suggesting that, even were the train service to be withdrawn, permission to lift the track should be reserved for a later decision. The battle continues! ED)

Wrexham to Chester Singling: – A Case Study



I am writing this note on the (standing room only) Inter-City train to Euston, (on 28th October 1985) but having made the connection at Chester for Wrexham. If the Wrexham – Chester line was single track I would still be at Wrexham General as the "up" steel train has failed on the Gresford bank this morning.

The Chairman of B.R., Sir Robert Reid, had written to me in the summer and asked me to contact Mr Bartlett of the Regional Operations Department at Crewe to go over details of B.R.'s proposed singling of the line. In order to examine a real life situation I chose two days at random, selected the day with the heavier traffic flows, and agreed with Mr Bartlett the times that trains passed Wrexham North and Green Lane Signal boxes.

An Appendix (supplied to readers on request but too long to reproduce here) shows the actual movements for the day selected (August 23rd 1985) and a further Appendix a notional timetable for the line had it already been singled.

From this it would be seen that, apart from a two-hour quiet period over lunch, traffic on the line is very heavy from soon after 6 am to 11 pm. Recent checks on the number of movements in any one day have shown days with up to 48 trains as opposed to the 42 on the day chosen. It is very easy to see that using B.R.'s analysis there would be no spare slots or quiet periods between 6 am and 11 pm on any such day. But does this analysis imply that the line can be safely singled, and perhaps more important is the analysis correct in interpreting what would have happened on that day if the line was single track?

I believe the answer to both questions must be a resounding NO!

Rail-Supporting Councils

Many County, District and Parish Councils have given financial contributions to BR over the years in order to help reopen or improve stations, promote services, run additional trains, install automatic level crossings and provide "park and ride" schemes, and other similar projects.

RDS has produced a list of such Councils and what they have done. This should provide useful ammunition for anyone wishing to persuade their own local authority to support rail. We do not claim that the list is comprehensive and are always pleased to receive information which will enable us to update it.

Please send any information to: Alan Harwood, 139, Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN. Mr Harwood would also be pleased to supply you with a copy of the list at £1.00 plus postage.

Firstly the train times shown are between two signal boxes but the proposed single track would extend "down" of Green Lane all the way to Saltney Junction. This would add about two minutes to every train's running time shown in Appendix B (where one "up" train follows another a signal would allow the second train to wait near to the Green Lane Signal Box and this would shorten the two minute period).

Secondly "down" trains would not automatically be able to proceed onto Saltney Junction and would have to take account of movements up AND down on the North Wales Coast line. It is difficult to quantify delays here, but today's 07.35 ex Wrexham "down" reached Saltney Junction 8 minutes late because of delays due to the steel train failing on the "up" line. It waited before the junction for the 06.00 Holyhead to Euston to pass and lost a further 6 minutes arriving at Chester at 08 07, 14 minutes late.

Thirdly, Appendix B shows running times with trains passing the two signal boxes at speed. In practice trains would be queuing up to traverse the single section. They would be stationary. A class 47 locomotive can easily take 5 minutes extra in such a situation (one minute for the driver to get back into the cab, one minute for power to develop in the engine and then about 2 minutes to gain speed at Saltney or 4 minutes at Wrexham due to the gradient).

I have travelled on such a locomotive from Wrexham and my advice received

The Light Rail Transit Association

Formed in 1938 as the Light Railway Transport League, the Association promotes interest in and the development of Light Rail Transit (LRT) worldwide, but with special reference to the U.K. This is of course particularly relevant with the various current proposals.

It is a non-profit making, nonpolitical organisation with a world-wide membership covering all sectors of interest, both amateur and professional. The Association publishes the monthly "Modern Tramway" (jointly with Ian Allan) as well as a range of books. Meetings are held in a number of cities.

For further details of membership, please write to: LRTA subscriptions, 6, Hermitage Woods Crescent, St. John's, Woking, Surrey, GU21 1UE

from local railwaymen regarding this extra time necessary was more than verified on that occasion. A DMU would have about two minutes added to its time at Saltney Junction, more than this at Wrexham.

Fourthly: any failure would completely block the line with serious delay resulting to many passengers and much freight. Some trains would necessarily require a rescue locomotive from the Wrexham direction and the nearest available is usually Bescot!

Fifthly, signalmen would have an extremely difficult job. They would naturally wish to keep passenger trains on time, or at least not delay them further as over 70% of "down" trains at Wrexham are already 5 minutes late or more. As they could not be certain of freight trains traversing the single section in say, 14 minutes (they may easily take 25 minutes) they would not take the risk running a freight immediately before a passenger train and would rather leave a 14 minute gap. Sometimes signalmen will simply anticipate, or plan ahead, wrongly and further delay would ensue. All these reasons lead me to believe that the proposals contained in Appendix B are looking at the working of this line through rose coloured spectacles. It simply will not be the case that trains will enter and leave the single track section punctually for hours on end with only one minute between each other.

The extension of the line 2 minutes north of Green Lane signal box up to Saltney junction, the problem of waiting to get on to the North Wales Coast Line, the extra time required to pick up speed from rest and the problems facing signalmen would all extend the time taken for the trains to travel along the single section. The proposals contained in Appendix B are therefore unrealistic. The line cannot be safely singled – is it will become a notorious bottleneck. There would be no flexibility, rather a continuous headache for signalmen in order to try and get the traffic through. No development of the line would be possible. Proposed extra trains to Deeside Paper Mills, or Shotton steelworks, or from Bensham pit could only be accommodated at the expense of something else.

For all these reasons the case AGAINST singling is overwhelming. I hope BR (who already describe the plan as "tight-ish") will think again and abandon their proposal.

Dr John Marek, MP*

* (John Marek is M.P. for Wrexham. RDS undertook a major campaign against excessive line singling a year or so ago – with some degree of success – and we are grateful to Dr. Marek for this useful case study which proves many of our points ED)

FREIGHT REPORT

Since our last report the Freight Sub-Committee has met in Rochdale, Nottingham, Great Yarmouth and Manchester. We have discussed and taken action on a wide variety of topics.

Our Rochdale meeting was preceded by a visit to the Standard Railway Wagon Company works at Heywood, where we were impressed by the atmosphere of purposefulness and cleanliness. Several different types of wagon were under construction at this large wagon works, two of which are of great import for the future expansion of railfreight. One is a four-axle side-tipping wagon, the other a four-axle container wagon. The first type is under construction for mineral traffic, but the design can be applied to any bulk material (agricultural produce, semi-finished industrial raw material etc.) so long as it will "pour". The design will make the unloading of rail wagons as convenient as that of road vehicles without the need for expensive infrastructure.

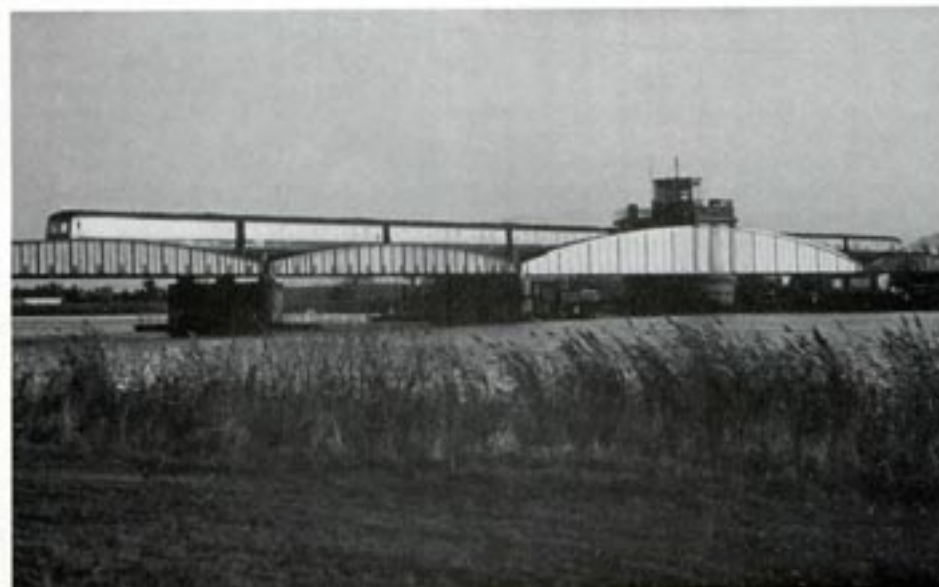
The series of container wagon under construction is for new traffic flows from the Petfood Company factory at Melton Mowbray to Heywood and Welwyn. These wagons will carry curtain-sided containers which can be unloaded straight into a lineside warehouse, as with an ordinary wagon, or be lifted onto a road vehicle for direct delivery into a supermarket. The significance is that if Petfood, pressured locally for lorry nuisance, can switch their trucking to rail, many other companies can do so. We shall continue to liaise closely with the Private Wagon Federation at top level.

FSC are keen to see container wagons, such as those under construction at Standard, used to start the

movement of containers by Speedlink to and from privately-run intermodal depots, Freightliner Depots and factory private sidings (though not BETWEEN Freightliner Depots, we hasten to add). Freightliner carry 43% of the container market, so there is 57% left to compete for by Speedlink. We believe that the present spread of Freightliner depots is too wide for there to be any further penetration of the market by rail. Many more "low tech" depots are needed so that, in general, no part of the U.K. is much more than 30 miles from a terminal. We would hope that somebody with enough capital would organise this market and urge the BRB and Freightliner to recognise that such an operation would not damage Freightliner's prospects but would, in fact increase throughput and reduce the costs of their terminals.

We are impressed by the special booklet which RAILFREIGHT have produced to allay fears of local residents in Bournemouth and Poole about noise and disturbance due to possible rail-borne oil traffic from the Wytch Farm oil field. It is gratifying to see BR making a first class effort to gain traffic in this way. The FSC have, of course, supported efforts by BR in a variety of ways. These include representations to Dorset County Council urging them to allow development of the oil field only if rail is the transport medium. The use of electric traction, modified wagons and continuous welded rail will considerably reduce any noise nuisance from extra rail traffic. The additional use and development of existing infrastructure is, in our view, far better than disturbing a delicate landscape by building pipelines which can only be "temporary".

P.Wakefield



The much battered bridge at Goole is at last under repair - see page 6 col. 2

Photo: Graham Wragg

We're getting there - Yate Station BR probe

(continued from Regional Notes)

"Yate Town Council eagerly welcome a proposal to open a new railway station," said Chairman Susan Walker. BR have confirmed that they are looking at the possibility of running a train from a station at Yate to link with a major station nearby.

"We have been monitoring the population expansion in Yate and we are considering proposals to provide some form of service for the town's increasing numbers of commuters" said BR spokesman, Alan Harrison. "If a train link does not appear feasible then a Park-n-Ride service may be the answer". He said that commuters would be able to leave their vehicles at a long-stay car park and would be taken by express bus direct to a major station.

BR is already committed to a £2 million revamp at Parkway Station in Stoke Gifford, where the idea of large car parks away from the city centre was first put into practice. "Since Parkway was built 12 years ago it has gone from strength to strength, certainly beyond all our anticipations" said Mr Harrison. "Now, the facilities there are not what we would like to see for a station dealing with the number of passengers it does.

Cllr. Walker's reaction to the news about a possible Yate station was one of 'satisfaction'. "We have been nagging them about this for three years and it's nice to think they have actually sat up and taken notice" she said. "A lot of people travel from Yate to Bristol and a lot travel to London. We have been fighting very hard for them but up to now we have had little response. Trowbridge and Chippenham have both got their own stations and Yate is bigger than both of them. It's daft" she added. "Mind you if we can only get a park and ride we will be happy with that because it's a step in the right direction."

Trains last stopped at Yate's existing station in the 1950s. Mr Harrison said the earliest date a station might open in the town would be late 1986 or 1987. Meanwhile the Town Council has received a letter from Avon County Council announcing that reports on bus passenger and vehicle movements out of the town would be available in July 1986.

Northavon District Council will distribute 11,000 leaflets in Yate requesting local residents views on the future of the town. The Council is presently preparing a Local Plan for the area and is anxious that local people are given "every opportunity to influence important decisions affecting their area".

Adrian Smith

MEMBERS' PLATFORM

Railwatch

Sir,

I write in response to "RAILWATCH" No.25.

I had hoped that the standard of publication might be improving; sadly this seems not to be the case. It is a great pity that the good material in there – your own leading article, the freight item and the conference report among others are bogged down in a mass of grey print and sheer gibberish.

I do not believe that there needs to be such a long time for preparation of the publication. Much of the material clearly had to be written in July for something which appears in late October. This is ridiculous.

There are no photographs!

I trust there will be no more cartoons down to the current standard and that no more will be commissioned.

The Icknield report should have been consigned to the waste bin where it clearly belongs. Is this really the image RDS wishes to present?

Bridgenorth.

It is usual to put the "£" sign before figures which indicate sums of money and I am encouraged to see that this has been done in several places.

There is a great deal of work being done to further the cause of railway development in the branches and users' groups and the receipt of documents such as the current RAILWATCH leads me to despair of the national organisation. Does it really take six of you to produce it?

John Brodribb
Beccles
Suffolk

Sir,

Thank you for publishing several recent items in the last few issues. Please note that my home town is BRIDGNORTH not Bridgenorth. RDS always put in an "e".

I feel you need to change the format of RAILWATCH. Sharp attractive photographs depicting railway development and RDS special trains are needed. This lack of attractive photos detracts from RAILWATCH. Please try to include as many photos as possible of these in future issues; it will enhance your publication.

Chris Magner
Bridgnorth
Shropshire

The Editor Comments

Material published in RAILWATCH can only be selected from that which is submitted for publication, the same goes for photographs. The higher the

standard of copy submitted, and the more there is of it, the higher will be the standard of the finished product.

The exceptionally long delay between copy date and publication date on the last two issues arose from doubts in the second half of the year of the Society's ability to fund 4 issues, rather than due to lethargy on our part.

Due to more efficient methods of production (with computerisation) we are, in any case, now able to reduce our "turn-round" time. This is reflected in the copy date for the next issue shown on the back page.

The six members of the Editorial Board have clearly defined functions and are not all engaged on editorial work as a glance at the credits of this publication (and IN PARLIAMENT) will verify. KW)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor will consider for publication letters and articles (such as the above). Any opinions expressed, however, must not be taken as necessarily reflecting the official views of the Society. The Editor also reserves the right to make "cuts" and other alterations which retain the sense of the original copy.

We are always pleased to receive good quality black & white prints of subjects of interest to members for inclusion in the journal.

RDS ANTI-CLOSURE FUND

On November 20th this fund totalled £150, following several generous donations from RDS members and after further payments had been made from the fund to help those fighting the Balloch Pier and Settle – Carlisle closure proposals.

Further contributions, large or small, are always welcome. The fund can be used to help any RDS branch or users' group that may have to fight a passenger closure proposal. Donations to Trevor Garrod, 15, Clapham Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1RQ

R.D.S. Lottery

Enclosed with this issue of RAILWATCH is a new Prospectus for the RDS Lottery with fewer but more valuable prizes. At present we are making about £36 a month (with a similar amount available in Prize Money). With your help we can at least double that so JOIN NOW by completing and returning the FORM(S) with your remittance or Bankers Order to the Lottery Officer.

SUBSCRIPTIONS – If you have recently renewed your subscription to RDS a new MEMBERSHIP CARD IS ENCLOSED. If, however, your subscription falls due in the next few months A RENEWAL FORM IS ENCLOSED. A donation over and above your subscription will always be welcome.

WANTED

Administrative Officer

The scale of the work of RDS has increased very substantially in recent years and a stage has now been reached where it is no longer possible to operate entirely by voluntary effort. It has therefore been decided to appoint an administrative officer, who will be paid an honorarium, to act as central administrator of the Society's functions. Specific duties will include:-

Organisation of the Annual General Meeting and of the Society's National Executive, including the issue of Minutes and Agenda, co-ordination of the activities of the Sub-Committees, with each other and with the National Executive.

General correspondence – i.e. writing letters and answering incoming correspondence or directing it to appropriate officers or committees for attention. Attending meetings of the National Executive and the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

The work is estimated to average 1-2 days per week but this is variable depending on the Society's overall workload. Applicants should possess good administrative and human relations skills, have access to a typewriter and be available on the telephone. All applications for this post should be sent to the General Secretary, R.J.P. Townend, "St. Julians", Sevenoaks, Kent by **31st March 1986**.

.....STOP PRESS.....

Marylebone Enquiry date still uncertain

At the time of going to press the date for an inquiry into the closure of Marylebone was still uncertain the London Borough of Brent having applied to the House of Lords for leave to appeal against the decision of the Court of Appeal.

The meeting due to be held on 16th January was therefore postponed until the outcome of the application (made before Christmas) is known.

NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS

We regret that due to production difficulties with this issue of RAILWATCH, mainly arising from the volume of material submitted – particularly for REGIONAL NOTES – and the need for its timely appearance, some items have had to be scrapped or rolled forward to the next issue. ED.

REGIONAL NOTES

LONDON & HOME COUNTIES

On the rail closure front (for more than just London) the scene is still dominated by Marylebone (and the lines to Harrow and South Ruislip) but it now seems the respite (of nearly a year) could well be over as the Court of Appeal, in November, was of the unanimous view that the London Regional Passengers' Committee could conduct its proceedings how it thought fit and unless the joint Local Authorities Working Party, at its meeting on 16th January, has resolved to take the case to the House of Lords the Branch will be blowing the dust off its case against closure for an Inquiry which will undoubtedly be imminent.

On 3rd October about a dozen representatives of RDS and local users groups attended a presentation when Theo Steel, (then B.R. London & South East Manager (Eastern) and Mr Etherington (Project Manager) explained the Board's proposals for the redevelopment of Liverpool Street. We were assured that the options for 2 extra tracks into the station would be kept open, should future demand warrant, and to allow the possible extension of the East London Line into the terminus at some future date.

Whilst the existing 6 approach tracks would be retained, mostly on their existing alignments, resignalling and track layout alterations would facilitate more flexible train movements. Meanwhile the Branch will be working closely with the North London Line(k) Committee to secure and boost the new and improved service (ex Broad Street) to Stratford on completion of the Graham Road Curve (this Spring).

Only a few days later (on 7th October) Mr Steel was the guest speaker at another public meeting in Chelmsford (organised in conjunction with ASLEF) to further the case for construction of a new station at Springfield on the NE outskirts of the town. Whilst the results of a feasibility study were still awaited he emphasised that BR wanted to improve facilities at the existing station as well, which he saw as their largest local passenger market. Correspondence with both BR and Essex County Council on this important topic is ongoing.

The Society's growing number of lady members in London and the South East were represented at County Hall on 13th October when Vera Humphreys attended a Conference organised by the G.L.C. specifically to discuss the transport needs of women. Valerie Wise, G.L.C. Women's Committee Chair, said

that as more women used public transport than men, it was about time proper consideration was given to their needs by those who planned and ran the services.

As a foretaste of what is to come in May (with electrification) Branch Committee Member, H. Trevor Jones, took a goodly company of members on an illustrated trip along the "1066 Line" (Tonbridge - Hastings) on the evening of 3rd December at our usual meeting place, Fred Tallant Hall, Euston.

The Branch A.G.M. has been arranged for 17th February at County Hall (the last time we will have the opportunity to meet there with the abolition of the G.L.C.). After the formal business the guest speaker will be our old friend Dave Wetzel, G.L.C. Transport Committee Chair, who will tell us where he feels London's transport will go after 1st April.

All Chapters of our local Guidebook "Kent & East Sussex by Rail" are now complete and we are putting the finishing touches on presentation and marketing. Further details for advance orders and publication date may well be enclosed with this issue of RAILWATCH.

Further details will have been sent to local members with a Mini issue of RAILONDON and the formal notice of the A.G.M. Meanwhile the main areas of concern to the Branch are forthcoming cuts in services on the Gt. Northern Electrics (out of Moorgate) and between Paddington and Slough. We are also mobilising support (in Kent), particularly among concerned environmentalists, for the Society's national campaign in support of a Channel Fixed Link.

John Barfield

WEST MIDLANDS

Two clouds presently hang over the Midlands branch as we enter the new year. The B.R. Heads of Information regarding closure of part of the North Warwick Line have been circulated seeking details of objectors "hardship" in readiness for the public enquiry due in the summer. Although 7,077 objections were made B.R. seem very determined to press on with their axe and with the consequential 2-hourly service to Stratford-upon-Avon. Our other problem is the still outstanding debt to the printer for our Guidebook "Midlands by Rail" and in recent months we have had to concentrate our activities on book sales.

The Walsall Group ran its DMU charter to Chester on 5th October and the Lichfield group ran a successful EMU trip to London on 7th December. The Midlands branch A.G.M. is due to be

held on Saturday 8th February at its usual venue (Dr. Johnson House, Birmingham) and to augment our income we do hope to run charter excursions to places such as York, Blackpool and Windsor during 1986. When the West Midlands County Council folds up on 1st April the new Joint Passenger Transport Board will take over under the wing of Coventry City Council.

Rail services in the West Midlands carried two million more passenger journeys in 1985 than in 1984. At June 1985 the Walsall line had increased patronage by 25% over the previous year. With better rolling stock and services we can do even better. We therefore hope to see more of the "Sprinters" (especially Metro Cammell built) in the Midlands before long - and better still some more electrification.

We are yet again lobbying hard for Staffordshire to reopen the Cannock Line and particularly hope that the BRB can agree to this being provided on a marginal cost basis. No track or signal improvements are required and thus the only running costs are for the one-hourly DMU on an otherwise freight-only line. Since September Evesham has enjoyed a brand new direct train service to Birmingham (one each way at present). From May an early morning Stratford-on-Avon to Coventry DMU is expected. To the south or west of Coventry the NCB is planning to sink a new £400m. coal mine. The two options are just north of Tile Hill, near Berkeswell, or immediately north of Kenilworth. Either site would be rail served from Kenilworth using a disused branch line.

Alan Bevan

EAST ANGLIA

Central to the Branch's campaigning recently has been the publication of its new four-page leaflet "A New Future for Local Trains". The leaflet was launched on Saturday 23rd November in Woodbridge at a public meeting called by the East Suffolk Travellers' Association - one of the oldest of the line users' groups affiliated to RDS and celebrating its 20th birthday.

The meeting was also called to celebrate the completion of BR's £1.7m. modernization of the East Suffolk Line with open crossings, automatic points and radio control of trains. The RDS leaflet explains how these work, and how they can reduce operating costs and lead to better services, and hopes to stimulate similar schemes in other parts of the country. National Vice-Chairman, Steve Wilkinson, introducing the leaflet, said that it represented a positive answer to

those politicians and officials who wanted to write off rural railways, and also strengthened the case for restored passenger services on lines which are now restricted to freight services.

One freight-only line in our region once more regained passenger trains for one day on 28th September, when a three-car diesel-multiple unit chartered by RDS in conjunction with two of our local associated groups made two return trips on the Dereham branch. Our efforts to run a similar charter train on the Swavesey branch in Cambridgeshire have, however, so far been thwarted by doubts at some level of BR management about the suitability of the track.

The new "Sprinter" DMU spent a weekend in our area in November, travelling on various branches which are likely to see it in regular use from 1987. We have sent comments to BR on members' reactions to the smoothness of ride, seating and other facilities.

One of our most successful affiliated groups, the North East Norfolk Travelers' Association, celebrated its tenth anniversary in October and, at a packed AGM in Cromer, was able to present North Walsham Rotary Club with a cheque towards the purchase of a wheelchair for a local handicapped child. The cheque represented part of the profits on NENTA's excursion train from North Walsham to Portsmouth which was run in conjunction with the Rotary Club.

On the same line, a suggestion from our member, John Peacock, has led to BR's putting in an extra stop at Gunton on the late Sheringham - Norwich train on Friday evenings. The reason - to encourage patrons at the adjacent public house to drink and then let someone else do the driving home!

The A.G.M. of the Branch will be held in the Lecture Theatre of Peterborough City Museum and Art Gallery on Saturday 22nd February at 2 p.m. The Museum is in Priestgate, less than five minutes walk from the station, to the south of the new shopping centre. Members of neighbouring branches will also be welcome to attend. Guest speaker will be Mr Mike Eveleigh, the new Chairman of Cambridgeshire County Council's Transport Committee.

Trevor Garrod

YORKSHIRE

With the announcement by the Ministry of Transport that West Yorkshire is to be limited in the next financial year to a figure of £57.8m. on buses and trains - 14 millions less, it is claimed, than the amount needed to maintain the present level of services - the shadow of Serpell looms ever more menacingly over the rail network.

The present position is that the three TUCC inquiries into closure proposals have been held and are awaiting a government decision. Two more TUCC inquiries are pending. There are suggestions that the steady reductions in government grants could result in the complete withdrawal of all rail services to Ilkley, from both Bradford and Leeds, and also of services to Keighley and the closure of Forster Square Station in Bradford.

Meanwhile Bradford City Council fear for the future of their Inter-City rail services, as once the line from King's Cross to Leeds has been electrified, services to Bradford could be downgraded to the status of a branch-line DMU. The Council's Conservative Deputy Group Leader has stated that business people coming to Bradford are appalled at the poor quality of the train services between Bradford and Leeds.

West Yorkshire County Council's Road Safety Committee report that in 1984 road accidents in the county cost £90.7m., taking into account hospital treatment, insurance and time off work.

Work has now started on repairing the Goole Swing Bridge, beginning with strengthening the cast iron pillars on the approach to the central jetty. British Rail have been criticized for the long delay in starting the work since they received the £800,000 from the Humberside Council last March. At the end of October the bridge was struck again by a ship travelling upstream to Howden-dyke.

On the final day of the TUCC hearing into the closure proposals for the Huddersfield - Denby Dale line British Rail officials found themselves cast in the not unfamiliar role of Shylock. A West Yorkshire Transport Chief offered them a cheque for £200,000 in a last-minute effort to save the line from closure. The cheque was refused, British Rail's officials saying that they wanted £500,000 and nothing less.

British Rail has entered into an agreement with Humberside County Council to modernize the Hull - Scarborough line with the new diesel trains termed "Pacers" and with automatic level crossings which should lead to an improvement in services.

Denis Bradbury

SEVERNSIDE

The article reproduced on page 3 appeared in the "Northavon Gazette" dated 25th October 1985. There have been periodic rumblings in the press about a station for Yate, but this is the first time that I have seen a favourable reaction from a BR official. The biggest disadvantage of life in Yate during the 17 years I have lived there has been the

difficulty in reaching the long-distance transport network, whether for journeys by rail or by coach. Bristol Parkway station is 10 miles away and little use for people without a car to get them there; there is no direct bus and the last time I attempted the journey by bus it took 2 hours, including a 50-minute wait between buses at Downend. Ordinarily I use Stapleton Road (on the Yate bus route) or Temple Meads. Two main rail routes pass through Yate itself. The population of Yate/Sodbury now approaches 30,000.

NORTH WEST

The North West TUCC plans to hold public hearings into the proposed closure of the Settle - Carlisle line as follows:

Appleby Grammar School: 24th - 26th March;

Trinity Further Education Centre, Carlisle: 2nd - 4th April.

The RDS, as one of the three founder members of the Settle to Carlisle Joint Action Committee, will be presenting its case for the retention of the line. It is, however, equally important that all readers who are registered objectors appear at one of the Hearings to present their case as well. This is vital if the line is to be saved. Anyone requiring further details should contact the Joint Action Committee on 0524 388525.

At a recent meeting of the Cumbria Railway Association, Cyril Bleasdale, BR Sector Director Inter-City, made the startling announcement that as from 1988 ALL Inter-City services will be withdrawn from Blackpool, Holyhead and Barrow. I was going to use this space to announce that the 09.43 Blackpool to Euston train, which was reinstated following much public protest, had been withdrawn again at the end of the Blackpool illuminations. Mr Bleasdale's announcement makes the withdrawal of this one train seem insignificant. Not many months ago the rumour that BR was going to withdraw Inter-City services from Blackpool, and close Enfield Road, Blackpool sidings, was put to BR management. At that time it was CATEGORICALLY DENIED! It would appear that once again rumour knows more about what is to occur on BR than its own management (unless of course they are deliberately misleading staff and public alike as to their true intentions which would be a serious matter in a nationalised industry charged with providing a public service).

In September a joint submission from Lancashire County Council and the Greater Manchester Council was made to the Department of Transport for the £13 million Transport Supplementary Grant (TSG) needed for the electrification between Manchester and Blackpool

to proceed. The submission included additional information on the benefits of electrification to Blackpool's tourist and conference trades, Bolton's aspirations for more office accommodation and the potential benefits of a through electric service to Manchester Airport, should that also be approved.

The submission threw some interesting light on the ground rules laid down by the D.Tp. for the authorisation of TSG. The Department have stated in the past that for a TSG submission to be approved it should have more than purely local benefit to the community. In advance talks with LCC/GMC the D.Tp. advised them that TSG may not be payable on that portion of the electrification scheme which benefits Inter-City (i.e. that portion which is other than a purely local benefit to the community). It would appear that in their efforts to avoid investing in the railways the Department can indeed stand logic on its head!

My meetings have been taking place recently between Lancs County Council and BR officials over the improvements planned to Preston station in conjunction with the multi-million pound shopping centre being built on BR land alongside the station. Having heard that BR were to spend a considerable amount of money on station improvements Lancs CC agreed to spend several hundred thousand pounds on environmental improvements to the station and its approaches. Imagine the feelings when BR came back to say that £300,000 had been chopped from its side of the bargain but BR are confident that if the County Council and Preston Borough Council were able to maintain their original commitment of £225,000 without insistences that this be directly matched by BR the previously planned pure environmental package could be completed."

Needless to say the two councils involved are not too happy at this novel twist to BR's policy of extracting pound for pound promises out of local authorities for station improvements. The last news was that the two councils are still to spend their money but they are seeking urgent explanations from BR as to their change of heart. As the major shopping centre is on leasehold land from BR and will produce a healthy rent for the railway it is yet another example of such income being used to reduce PSO Grant from central government rather than being ploughed back into the system for everyone's benefit.

G.Boyle/R.Watts

NORTH MIDLANDS

The tourist potential of the Peak District was convincingly demonstrated in the Summer by packed special passenger trains on the freight-only lines from Derby to Wirksworth, and New Mills Central to Buxton. The "Wirksworth

Phoenix" was so popular that it was repeated in September, whilst Peak Rail and BR were planning to run Christmas shoppers' specials from Buxton through to Sheffield on two Saturdays in December.

The Lincoln - Newark - Nottingham Rail Users' Group continued to campaign actively at its AGM in November. Local BR managers told the meeting that they had a positive attitude towards the line and pointed to many forthcoming improvements. Trains now used the refurbished Central station at Lincoln; Nottingham station improvements would soon be completed, including modernized passenger lifts, VDU train indicators on the platforms and APTIS machines to speed up ticket issuing. It was hoped to raise the substandard platform at Collingham and to improve lighting at Rolleston.

Out on the line, conductor guards would soon have PORTIS machines able to issue tickets through to more destinations, and further level-crossing modernization with concomitant staff savings should enable the line to open for longer hours than the present double-shift daily, to give theatregoers their long-awaited late-night train from Nottingham in 1987. Reliability should improve significantly when the area receives the first fifty production "Sprinter" DMUs, which cost half a million pounds a unit. In fact the prototype Class 150 units have already been running in service on the line, whilst the Metro-Cammell class 151 provided a further novelty on the Matlock branch.

Malcolm Goodall

EAST MIDLANDS

Branch Committee member Darryl Taylor-Smith had a full-page article published in the "Northants Evening Telegraph" on 24th October, putting the case for Inter-City electrification from Bedford northwards to Corby, Leicester, Leeds and Bradford. He stressed "now is the time for customers to articulate their needs." New business will, for example, almost certainly be generated if electric trains can work through from the North and East Midlands to Gatwick and the South Coast via the new Snow Hill link (London).

Some Wellingborough passengers have voiced their concern at the possibility of losing Inter-City trains if electrification goes ahead. Mr Taylor-Smith, however, suggests they "should perhaps assist positively by carrying out an unbiased survey among business and commercial interests and the public to see how big this market is. If such a survey points to an economic market, then BR will listen. After all, they are in the business of selling rail travel."

Trevor Garrod

LINCOLNSHIRE

A well-attended Branch meeting in Sleaford on 12th October heard a talk by East Anglian Branch member, John Brodribb, on the modernization of the East Suffolk Line and its relevance to Lincolnshire. Several of the lines in this county also have a large number of level crossings, and so the Branch has been sending the leaflet "A New Future for Local Trains" to councillors and other bodies to show them the benefits of the new-style crossings.

Another RDS leaflet that members have been distributing locally is "Driver-Only Trains: The Users' Point of View", which is especially relevant to South Humber-side with its busy freight traffic.

The AGM of the Branch was due to be held on Saturday 1st February at 2 p.m. in St. Mary-le-Wigford Church Hall, next to Lincoln Central Station, to be followed, after the business, by a video show.

Trevor Garrod

SOUTH WEST

The Devon membership is gradually increasing. We now have approx. 20 members and I feel that this increase is partly due to the willingness of the Exeter Area Manager of BR to allow display of RDS leaflets in his area; to librarians who are definitely sympathetic and again allow RDS leaflets to be displayed and not least, to existing members who spread the word.

It should be possible in this area to increase membership to a number sufficient to justify the formation of a formal committee. Once this figure is reached I feel that the recruiting of members would be even more speedy. A formal committee would also enable members of RDS in this area to feel fully integrated into the Society. If any members can think of new ways to interest the public or fresh places where the display of leaflets would be permissible, I should be pleased to know: (Mrs J. M. Fuller, 25, Sweetbriar Lane, Heavitree, Exeter, EX1 3AE - Tel: 79245).

The "Express & Echo" of 8th November 1985 reported that a joint approach by all South West counties is being made to British Rail for a better deal for the travelling public. It was said that relations between Devon and British Rail had always been good. It was also disclosed that £1,400,000 was being invested by BR in new units for the Exeter - Exmouth branch line and £40,000 on additional trains. The Devon Transport Co-ordination Sub-Committee is to give £20,000 to BR and contribute £5,000 to a joint publicity campaign

Joan M.Fuller

WALES

The inaugural meeting of the Society's Thirteenth Branch was held in Shrewsbury on 16th November and attended by members from most parts of the Principality. A Committee of ten was elected, including Chairman: Graham Tolliday; Secretary: Adrian Fawcett; Treasurer: Ted Evans; Press & Publicity Officer: Chris Magner. Our two former Area Representatives John Busler and Rod Mackay, will continue as Committee Members with responsibility for local issues arising in North and South Wales respectively.

The meeting was addressed by Mr M. Roorcroft, BR Area Manager at Shrewsbury, who is responsible for the lines to Aberystwyth and Pwllheli. He gave encouraging news of BR's plans for "Sprinters" and radio signalling on these lines and said the Barmouth Viaduct would be available again for loco-hauled trains in May 1986. A start has been made in getting local communities to adopt stations.

Unfortunately the Sunday train service along the Cambrian Coast line between Barmouth and Pwllheli operated by the Cambrian Coast Line Action Group did not load well this summer. Despite a generous subsidy by Gwynedd County Council the trains lost money. However, on the August Bank Holiday over 130 people patronised the 10.00 and 15.30 Pwllheli - Barmouth trains. Regrettably the service was not as well advertised as in previous years - advertising is vital in the organizing of special workings.

Because of the proposed investment of £4.7m. in the Cambrian Lines, suggestions were made in September that the Action Group should close down. This year Group bulletins and publicity have been late in production and meetings have been cancelled at short notice. Fortunately it was decided to keep the Group in being at its AGM. From past hard-gained experience we would advise all line promotion groups to remain in being even when long sought-after objectives have been achieved because the winds of change can so easily blow in different directions. Several times in the life-time of the Action Group suggestions have been made to close it down because the line "seemed safe". Each time history has shown that the decision to stay in being was the correct one. No line can ever be 100% safe. Other groups, please learn from CCLAG - DON'T CLOSE!

T.Garrod/C.Magner

SCOTLAND

The message, via Scotland, from the House of Lords

We have been looking at the recent report by the House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade. From it we deduce that the U.K. must urgently

reduce the extent to which it depends on motor vehicles.* Lavish road building (Scotland has been a leading culprit within the U.K.) must surely be stopped. We tried to tell the local public inquiry held in Dundee in November that completing the city's Inner Ring Road would cost 50p in interest for each peak hour vehicle expected to use it.

Evidence now reaching the Secretary of State (for Scotland) about the Stepps Bypass proposal (another in which we participated) shows that, because of the detour, motoring costs will INCREASE and 34.2 hectares will be lost to agriculture.* The only marked gain will be in travelling time. Will our descendants be able to export this? There are many ways in which the money could better be invested in rail.

One is the Dornoch Firth cut-off which is now going forward for Parliamentary approval but for which not all the money has yet been pledged. Another (very cheap) would be to guarantee the future of Balloch Pier Station, to which the Transport Users' Consultative Committee for Scotland has just short-sightedly

given the "thumbs down"; not noticing that if all the people from Merseyside and York northwards were to opt for only one sail on Loch Lomond in their life the daily use in summer could amount to thousands. Elsewhere in Strathclyde literally dozens of sensible rail improvements (from the St. Enochs Bridge CrossClyde link to station (re) openings in areas of increased population) cry out to be made (we have a 17-page document under preparation) and of course much remains to be done in Scotland despite Chris Green's historic period as General Manager of SCOTRAIL which is now coming to an end. We wish him well in his continuing career with BRB!

Frank Neville

* "Motor vehicles and their parts" and "Food, drink and tobacco" are the largest two categories in our adverse non-oil balance of payments accounting, respectively for -£2,502m. and -£3,301m. out of a total of £11,765m. 1984. (Per head of pop. this works at approx. -£50, -£66 and -£235 per annum).

THE PEDESTRIANS ASSOCIATION

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EDITORIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

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Mr Cooper is responsible for REGIONAL NOTES, Mr. Willson for all other material. It is hoped to produce a small (4-page only) issue of RAILWATCH to be sent out with the A.G.M. documentation in April (AGM Notice enclosed with this issue). Contributions for same (which will need to be proportionately shorter - for Regional Notes) should be in the hands of the appropriate Editor by 12th FEBRUARY.

THERE IS NO "IN PARLIAMENT" WITH THIS ISSUE.

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