

## SCOTRAIL SOLD DOWN RIVER OVER DORNOCH BRIDGE

RDS has for years castigated successive governments over the apparent double standards adopted when assessing the viability of road and rail schemes and no better example of this can be seen than the latest Dornoch Bridge saga.

Situated north of Inverness (see attached Map) the Dornoch Firth is over 600 miles from London. Nevertheless the Society in an impromptu Report, released to the Press on 18th September claimed that the issue, which relates to recognition of all the financial benefits and assistance available for rail projects, is of significance to many similar schemes arising elsewhere in Britain.

RDS Chairman, Alan Bevan, at a Press Conference held in London on that day said "If British Rail is to be prevented from competing on equal terms by confining investment to road-only infrastructure our rail network is going to shrink dramatically in the next 10 years" - a sentiment echoed by ASLEF Asst. General Secretary, Lew Adams at the present TUC Conference. "The Dornoch decision must be reversed if Britain is to avoid massive cuts in rail services."

So what is the apparent volte face which has led to this whole unhappy affair? A £20 million bridge across the Dornoch Firth is one of a series of three estuarial crossings being built as part of a £300 million plan to dramatically shorten and improve the A9 route through the Highlands of Scotland. The 168 mile Inverness - Wick/Thurso railway which generally parallels the A9 is to enjoy none of these short cuts as a result and its future will be imperilled by buses, paying only a fraction of the road tax of other commercial vehicles of a similar weight, able to halve the journey time.

With the prospect of losing over 50% of its passenger traffic British Rail have also sought the opportunity to bridge the Dornoch Firth, unfortunately its attempts have floundered on artificial barriers and misfortune. The provision of a rail bridge would enable the railway to offer similar journey times and to compete more effectively with road, but the set-back to BR's plans could well precipitate the closure of the Far North Line with catastrophic results for the Highland communities.

So where have BR gone off the rails on this project? In a Commons Statement on 24th June Mr. Michael Ancram, Environment Minister at the Scottish Office, said "My Department gave BR a

positive response and the offer of technical assistance. It was made clear that the assistance was being offered on two conditions. The first was that Scotrail should not delay the road building project and the second was that Scotrail would meet its own share of the costs."

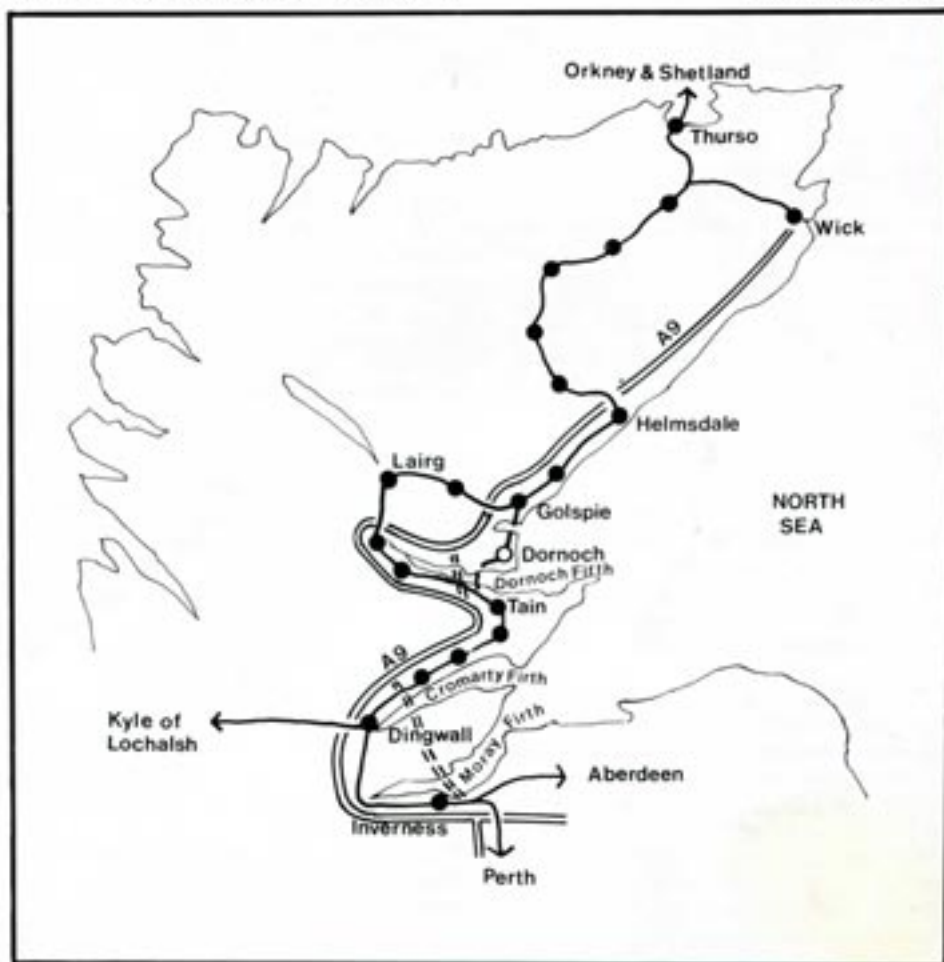
Following discussions with local interests it was ascertained that £8.2m. of the £12.7m. cost of the rail bridge could be found from those bodies and the E.E.C. and at a Press Conference in Inverness in July 1985 Scotrail General Manager, Chris Green, warned "If the major opportunity of the rail bridge was missed an hours difference between road and rail times could prove catastrophic for the line's future."

A subsequent feasibility study prepared for Scotrail for a similar rail bridge revealed that the Far North Line stood to lose 25% of its business by competition from the new road in 1990 which could result in closure of the 168 mile line. A new rail bridge on the other hand would

reduce track mileage and save £375,000 in operating costs. The line's £1m. annual loss would be reduced and the Government's £4.5m. contribution for the bridge repaid in 12 years.

The Government's deadline for submission of proposals for a rail bridge element to the Dornoch Firth crossing had been set for 1st June this year but in Parliament, on 17th June, David Mitchell, told a local MP "British Rail have not submitted a detailed submission for a grant under the 1968 Transport Act and doubts were cast on the possibility of E.E.C. funding for the project. In July Chris Leah, Scottish Provincial Services Manager of BR, who now seems to hold the purse strings following the departure of Chris Green and recent re-organisation of BR management, expressed disappointment that the joint rail/road bridge over the Dornoch Firth was not to proceed, stressing that the rail journey will be almost 4 hours while the bus journey with a road-only bridge would be reduced to about 2½ hours. So have Scotrail management been sold down the river by their masters in London?

*Continued over →*



In a letter to RDS on 29th July, BR Chairman, Sir Robert Reid, said "There is no question of our being constrained by procedural difficulties or by a Catch 22 situation. What I cannot do is to commit my Board to spend £12.7m. to safeguard revenue of £120,000 that might be lost?" But is this in fact the true figure? He added, however, "For the time being we shall continue with our application for statutory powers to construct a railway between Tain and Golspie in the hope that funding is available." At a later meeting he said "The Government's unwillingness to help finance a rail crossing of the Dornoch Firth has not altered BR's assessment of the desirability of a rail short cut to the north." But have BR really pushed this project as hard as they should \* or, like the Hastings electrification earlier this decade will have to give BR that push which will ensure that the scheme goes ahead in time to prevent the inevitable consequence - a contracting rail network for Scotland/Britain.

Both RDS President, Michael Caton, and RDS Scotland Research Officer, Ken Sutherland, are in continuing correspondence with Transport Minister, David Mitchell, and Bob Reid. Also N.C.I.T. Secretary, Klaus Meyer, in a recent letter to Mr. Mitchell said "It is essential that the sponsoring department moves towards resolving the various conflicting methods of assessment" (of road and rail schemes) and added "Even at this late stage it should not be too late for the sponsoring department to sanction the very small direct BR investment to safeguard the line's future."

But the need for an immediate modification of road-only bridge plans has been given dramatic new impetus. Discussions with engineering experts has revealed that any future rail bridge, constructed very close to an already built road bridge structure may prove technically very difficult and hugely expensive (due to weakening of substrata during piling operations etc.,). Unless a single integral structure is built/planned now, the Far North Line will face the ultimate CATCH 22 - because there is no other feasible crossing point of the Dornoch Firth.

Fuller details of the 'Dornoch Bridge Saga' are contained in the Society's 5-page report available from RDS Administrative Officer, Reg Snow, (Price 60p.) at 48, The Park, Great Bookham, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT23 3LS.

JWB

\* Correspondence with the Scottish Development Department revealed that some cash assistance might have been (might still be) available through a Section 56 Grant application since . . . . 'there are no absolute rules for such grants . . . . they are for exceptional projects each of which has to be considered on its own merits. . . .'

KS

## WANTED - AN ELECTRIFICATION PROGRAMME!

That has been the call of RDS members around the country in the past few months. Focus of the campaign has been our 6-page leaflet in which we point out that a 1981 BR/DTP study recommended a rolling programme of electrification schemes as being financially worthwhile - apart from the environmental case for electrification which we in RDS have propounded for many years.

Yet, five years after that high-level study, we still await such a programme. Lines are being electrified on a piecemeal basis which does not help equipment manufacturers or skilled operators in forward planning. Nor does it help us to catch up with comparable European railways. In France, where our total 1991 target percentage (of electrified routes) had been reached by 1970, there are plans to increase the electrified mileage by an amount equal to the total British electrified mileage by the end of the century!

RDS, therefore proposes that, as present schemes are completed, a start should be made on a further 690 miles (including the Midland Main Line, Manchester - Blackpool, Southampton - Portsmouth, Paddington - Oxford and others), to be completed by 1995, then a further 800 miles by the turn of the century.

The leaflet has been sent to MPs, Councillors, Peers, MEPs, BR management and unions, the TUC., CBI., and National Chamber of Commerce. We shall be continuing a dialogue with such bodies and asking the political parties if they will include such a programme in their Election Manifestos.

How much we can do depends on two things:-

1. Support from individual RDS members - like writing to your MP or Councillors; arguing the electrification case in any political party or similar body of which you are a member;

2. MONEY - RDS has no vested economic interest in electrification, and has to fund campaigns out of the same income from subscriptions, donations and sales that we use for all our other campaigning.

The General Secretary will be pleased to hear from any member willing to donate money or help in any other way.

## A.G.M. - 1987

Provisional arrangements have been made to hold the 1987 A.G.M. in Newcastle on 25th April - please note the date in your diary.

## FREIGHT NEWS

After the miners strike and the terrible damage it inflicted on Railfreight, BR Freight Sector kept its head down and concentrated on getting business back on to an even keel. In the past few months several hopeful signs have emerged that confidence has been, at least partially, restored.

Van den Burgh and Jurgens, better known as Stork and Summer County Margarine, have closed their wharf at Bromborough, Wirral and opted for Railfreight of approximately 250,000 tons of edible oils per annum from Purfleet to their factory on the Wirral. This involved considerable investment in new sidings and refurbished rolling stock. The line which services the factory is over a mile long and passes several other major factories. The Freight Committee is actively pursuing the possibilities of these other premises being rail connected.

In the same area, the freight-only line from Mickle Trafford Junction to Shotton Dee Marsh Junction, which acted as a by-pass for Chester, has been reopened due to increased steel, timber and paper traffic. The additional freight has been causing havoc to the passenger service on the Wrexham to Bidston line, which was recently singled.

BR are looking hard at the Trafford Park Industrial Estate in Manchester for potential traffic. This estate, built in the 1930s as a showpiece, had virtually every factory rail connected. After Kellogg's recent withdrawal from Railfreight, only Freightliner and Containerbase remain as rail users of the estate railway, which was designed for 10ft. wheelbase wagons and is unsuitable for modern rolling stock. A substantial amount of traffic is on offer from several companies, leading BR to consider a complete new route into the estate. The Cohn Products Company is experimentally using Railfreight from Ardwick Goods Yard in leased wagons (painted in their own colours), but, no doubt, a private siding direct to the factory would be much more convenient.

Railstore Ltd., who for several years have operated a rail-connected depot at Gidea Park, Essex, have recently opened a new depot in Birmingham. One of the first contracts won by this company is the importing of Perrier Water by ferry-wagons. Provided that this depot lives up to expectations they have plans for further depots in Manchester and Liverpool.

Pedigree Petfoods of Melton Mowbray are railfreighting petfood to Welwyn Garden City for onward distribution by road and a second train is due to start running shortly to Warrington - a contract worth some 220,000 tonnes per annum to BR. The Warrington end of this operation is to be situated in a rail served distribution depot to be

constructed on the site of the former British Steel works, where 250,000 sq. ft. of covered warehousing will receive a variety of food, drinks and paper related products.

Trial runs have been carried out with a new "Railroader" intermodal vehicle, which overcomes the intolerable payload restrictions of previous designs. The new vehicle is a 38 tonnes gross capacity tri-axle box semi trailer, operated by a UK subsidiary of Trailer Train of America. It uses air suspension on the trailer to lower itself onto a rail bogie which remains at the railhead when the trailer is on the road, giving a payload equivalent to its straight road equivalent. The new train has been seen at Ely, believed to be one of the permanent depots for the proposed services, which could have great impact on the Ro-Ro ferry traffic to Ireland and the Continent.

Sally Line, who operate out of the port of Ramsgate, have announced their bid to become the sole British ferry terminal for rail operations to the continent. They propose spending £16m. on new facilities for rail ferry wagons and ships including a new railway route to the quayside. This must be an attractive offer to BR as Sally Line are prepared to fund it themselves. This contrasts sharply with Dover, where BR have been expected to make a substantial contribution to the facilities essential for larger ferries themselves. Assuming that the Channel Tunnel is built, alternative methods of getting wagons to the continent are still considered essential to cover unforeseen circumstances.

After several years of quiet, the petroleum sub-sector appears to be gaining traffic. A contract for 1400 tonnes per day, between Immingham and Wearside, has been gained at the expense of steel shipping. This may be the first of many such contracts to be gained at the expense of shipping and pipelines caused by a change in the way Government levies tax on oil products. It is now paid when the oil leaves the refinery rather than when the product is sold. This favours the fastest mode of transport available - rail (It can take up to 30 days for oil to complete its journey through a pipeline the length of the country). Other oil traffic gains include crude from Humbly Grove (Hampshire) and Welton (Lincolnshire). Wytch Farm (Dorest) is set to increase its output of crude oil fivefold but, unfortunately, this increase makes it viable to pipe crude oil directly to Fawley, losing BR its present traffic from that field.

Other recent gains include round timber traffic from the Scottish and Norfolk forests and a contract to carry Guinness to Scotland and the North of England.

The Freight Committee have contacts throughout the industry in both the BR and private sectors. If you have any

ideas for potential railfreight traffic please forward them to Peter Wakefield, 43, High Street, Oakington, Cambridge,

who will pass them on to the Committee member best able to deal with them.  
George Boyle



SELBY - from "North East by Rail"

(Stephen Benyon)

## RDS RAILGUIDES

### Cheshire and North Wales by Rail

This newly published and fascinating 64 page guide, embracing such diverse places as Broadbottom and Bettws-y-Coed, is now available at just £1.95 (bulk orders of more than ten copies at £1.30) from Alan McGiffen, 29 Groveside, West Kirby, Merseyside or from the Sales Officer at the address below.

### Kent and East Sussex by Rail

This book covers the area to the east of the London-Tonbridge-Hastings line, except for the routes from London to Strood via Dartford, but with the addition of the Uckfield line. Besides describing the view from the train, tourist information and historical notes on places reached by alighting at many of the stations are given. The booklet also contains practical information on station facilities and bus connections.

Available from Mr. A. Johnson, 38 Grange Park, Ealing, London W5 3PP at £2.50 (cheques payable to "RDS (London) Book Account") or from the sales officer at the address below.

### Also . . . . .

- East Anglia by Rail
- Midlands by Rail
- North East by Rail
- Five Shires by Rail

all at £1.95 from the Sales Officer

To: Mr. G. Kent, RDS Sales Officer, 35A Clarendon Rd, Luton, Beds.

Please send me the following Railguides at £1.95 each (Kent & E. Sussex £2.50):

I enclose £.....(cheques made payable to "Railway Development Society".)

Name .....

Address .....

.....



# PLATFORM

## Anglia Day Ranger Tickets

Sir,

I feel that I must add comment to an article, in Railwatch number 28, referring to the loss of the Anglia Day Ranger Ticket.

For quite a number of years now my family and I have enjoyed a Saturday wandering around East Anglia on a Day Ranger ticket (winter and summer alike). Since May of this year, when a Two Day Ranger was substituted at a cost of £13.00, we have been unable to justify this cost and have thus not travelled at all in this area. Living in Stamford, just outside the boundary of this ticket area, the extra cost of a two day ticket for two people puts regular travel out of our price bracket. This year we have had to content ourselves with Saturday bus travel to places such as Nottingham.

I am quite a loyal traveller by train and use rail facilities where possible, but I have to prune this and not travel at all when fares price me off the rail. For example, I have a regular monthly commitment to travel to Lincoln but I cannot afford to travel on a "white" day. I am salaried, but my salary will not accommodate extra rail travel after last year's price increases, especially the hidden one of the "white" Saturday peak. During this period I travel by the less convenient coach. Thus, not owning a car, have been curtailed by the price from using the train to reach some regions.

The Two Day Ranger may be alright for those people living in Cambridge, Norwich or even Peterborough who have early Sunday morning trains, but, for those who have to travel into the Anglia area on a Sunday, the first train leaves Stamford at 14.18. This precludes value for money spent on this day.

I tend to agree with you, in our instance BR's loss is Barton's gain

B.Hornsey,  
Stamford,  
Lincs.

## North West TUCC

Sir,

With reference to the letter from Mr. E. Ratcliffe of Swinton on the subject of his dealings with my Committee with reference to Manchester to Harwich rail services (Railwatch, July 1986):—

In the interests of accuracy I would point out that your editorial note at the foot of the letter does not precisely detail the facts as they occurred. However, and although I understand the matter to have been resolved I have invited Mr Ratcliffe to meet me at his convenience.

J.A.Moorhouse,  
Secretary, TUCCNW

## Road & Rail Costs

Sir,

I was interested to read the letter from Mr Evans in Railwatch 28. In 1983 I attempted to do my own study, which involved much correspondence and many library visits, of the effect of the road network on the exchequer. Costs taken into account were: policing, lighting, maintenance, cleaning, DHSS costs, safety advertising, level crossings and even those of probationary and detention services for traffic offenders. The conclusion is that without roads, if other payments to and from the Government remained the same, the Government would be about £1bn worse off.

The current position, however, has resulted from almost irreversible Government policy. An attempt to reverse it and give equality to road and rail could:

(i) Allow companies to buy a railcard, for a few thousand pounds per staff member, giving employee's families the right to travel for an en bloc fare, payable by the company of, say, 5p per mile. It would also be subject to occasional service or 'maintenance' costs (which they would be unlikely to connect with the degree of usage) of roughly equal magnitude to the fares paid in the preceding months, and the staff liable to lump sum tax charges. This policy would be equivalent to that adopted for company cars.

(ii) Do a crude approximation of road/petrol taxation to the roads travelled over by usage of that petrol (in the same way fares are appropriated to routes in BR's accounting systems). Having done so, roads would be closed and customers encouraged to use the pre-Beeching rail network instead (which through fair play roles vis a vis roads would probably never have been reduced).

It is difficult to take this action but as a guide, if the accounting unit was an administrative area there would be no roads now in the Highlands of Scotland and, no doubt, many other areas too.

I have not considered non-financial costs and benefits which are considered, by crude conversion into financial terms, in studies for building of new roads.

Giles Baker,  
Weybridge,  
Surrey

## ANTI-CLOSURE FUND

This fund has kept rising steadily in recent months – mainly as a result of sponsored cycle rides – and now stands at £243.03 (the highest it has been for two years). The Fund enables us to help RDS Branches and Users Groups needing to fight rail closures. Thanks to those who have donated recently. Further donations are always gratefully received by the General Secretary.

## EIGHTH NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF RAIL USERS GROUPS

This is a major event on the RDS calendar, when delegates from all over Great Britain come together to hear and question leading figures in the railway field. This year's conference is on Saturday 15th November in University College, Bedford Way, London, from 10.45 to 16.30. Principal speakers will be Chris Green (Director of BR's Network SouthEast and formerly General Manager of Scotrail) and Don Mathew (Transport Campaigner, Friends of the Earth.)

All rail users' groups should by now have received invitations. Individual RDS members may also attend the conference, for which the fee is £2.50. Details from:- John Lark, 7, Gloucester Avenue, Gorleston, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, NR31 7LT (please enclose SAE).

## Rail Transport Study Circle – Inaugural Convention

The Rail Transport Study Circle has the very great pleasure of announcing its first convention to be held in Basel, Switzerland, from 22-26 June 1987.

The purpose of these conventions is to highlight major projects being undertaken on European networks to meet the challenge of passenger and freight requirements for the 1990s.

The theme will be "Railway 2000" – the title of the Swiss Railways modernisation programme. Delegates will be addressed by Dr Hans Stricker, General Secretary of the Swiss Federal Railways Board of Management, whose paper will cover: railway organisation in Switzerland, the "Bahn 2000" project, finance the "piggyback" concept, traction a rolling stock.

Other organisations contributing will be the Bern-Lotshberg-Simplon Railway, Interfrigo, Schindler Carriage and Wagon Company and the Basel Transport Authority. The latter will be particularly concerned with Light Rail Transit.

It is our intention to make these conventions informative, interesting and enjoyable – no less than six visits to installations has been arranged.

The cost per person is expected to be not less than £300 (subject to currency fluctuations). By arrangement with the travel operator, Transalpino Ltd., transport accommodation and insurance may be paid by ACCESS/VISA and we hope that RDS members will take full advantage of this facility.

Further information, including a full prospectus, can be obtained by sending a foolscap s.a.e. to:

Conference Secretary, RTSC, 206 Alexandra Park Road, London N22 4UQ (Closing Date 28/2/87).

# BOOKSHELF

**THE CLANDESTINE RAILWAY** – a report by the London Regional Passengers' Committee, Golden Cross House, 8, Duncannon Street, London WC2N 4JF.

This booklet is the first report of a working party set up to investigate the large number of complaints about BR services (as opposed to bus and tube) received by the LRPC.

33 test journeys were made on the London suburban network by LRPC members, who rated each journey on a points scale of 150. Marks were given for station signposting and maintenance, information, and ticket sales, together with punctuality of arrival and departure of the trains.

"By that not exacting standard", says LRPC, "every one of these journeys could be branded a minor disaster."

One of the surprising results from this experiment is that shortfalls in performance were found not to be in punctuality and timing, as folk lore would predict, but in station signing, information and timetable display. Timekeeping of arrival and departure, in fact ranked first and second in order of merit. Another surprise, even to a regular London rail user, is the vast difference in journey time and, in most cases, cost between rail and the bus/tube alternative. Rail was always speedier than tube/bus (sometimes by a factor of four or five), while bus was only cheaper than or equal to the cost of rail travel on 7 out of 33 trips.

The authors show a sense of outrage that a huge national asset has been allowed to decay, but they maintain a sense of humour throughout. Their criticisms, laced with laconic wit, are made without a trace of the genuine ill will towards rail transport evident in much of the national press. Rather, they seem to be asking us to laugh with them to preserve sanity in the face of the absurd. Suggestions for improvements range from improved service frequencies (20 mins for compatibility with the tube service) to easily implemented and cheap improvements such as investments in station signing. On-train timetables and "real-time" (dot matrix) platform information are among the more innovative suggestions.

With the timely arrival of the Network South East concept bringing, at last, a positive approach to marketing of services in London, it is to be hoped that this booklet will soon be of use only to the railway historian, who will use it as a reminder of how little we once valued local services in the London area. Just in case, however, it may benefit BR, the taxpayer and government alike to study this report.

KW

# REGIONAL NOTES

## Strong Support for London Master Plan

The London & Home Counties Branch Corporate Plan for the improvement of London's rail services was tabled at the Branch A.G.M. at County Hall on 17 February and Branch members gave it detailed consideration at a meeting held at the Jubilee Tavern, York Road, Waterloo on 8 July.

Keith Dyall (architect of the plan – with his colleagues on the Rail Development Sub-Committee), stated that for too many years there had been too little emphasis on the development of London's rail system, as compared with roads, yet far greater benefits would be obtained in improving railways. Outlining the Plan he pointed out that as long ago as 1981 RDS had persuaded the GLC to support the reopening of the Snow Hill Tunnel and at long last this was to become a reality. Rail development in London was unbalanced as between North and South and there was an urgent need for more Cross-London Links. General agreement was reached on the unsuitability of Waterloo as a terminus for Channel Tunnel trains and a terminal at Blackfriars and/or Olympia was preferred. Dr Tomlins advocated King's Cross, with a combined station for the Chunnel and the airports. Mr Barfield pointed out that abolition of the GLC left a vacuum which militated against some of the ideas.

Initial response to the proposals from BR, L & S.E. management had been constructive and helpful and consultation is now in progress with adjoining Branches, in particular the East Midlands Branch in the context of the campaign for Midland Main Line electrification.

The Branch's other preoccupation has been with the sale and marketing of the new guidebook "Kent & East Sussex by Rail", and our aim is to have it on sale on the bookstalls of all the London terminals serving the area involved. This frantic activity did not, however, prevent about a dozen members (from as far north as Watford – nay even Yorkshire) paying a visit to Folkestone on 26 July to see the Eurotunnel exhibition on the Channel Fixed Link and to observe, from the heights of Castle Hill, the site for the Cheriton complex. More significant was the use of Olympia as the main point of departure, sampling one of the new cross-London Inter-City trains from Manchester and Liverpool – the cause of some strange looks from regular Southern Electric train users, but a sight which should become more familiar once European services commence.

Also, on 6 September a party of about a dozen members went on what has

become the Branch's Annual Outing with a trip to Henley and Marlow (from Waterloo) via Guildford and Reading with the now customary gourmet Luncheon at a suitably sought out establishment in Henley-on-Thames. Future Branch meetings are planned for Southall, Chelmsford and Tonbridge/Tonbridge Wells.

John Barfield

## EAST ANGLIA

The Haven Ports and their rail links have recently been a focus of interest for the Branch. Mr Colin Crawford, Sealink's Port Manager at Parkeston Quay, gave an interesting talk on its future at our spring meeting. Across the estuary at Felixstowe, we mounted a Railfreight exhibition in the town's library, while our member Russell Whipps has been keeping a photographic record of the building of the new rail link from Trimley to the Dock, due to be opened in November.

Branch Secretary, John Brodribb, has taken up with BR their proposal to re-route the "European" Harwich – Glasgow train via North London from next May. We have been assured that there will be an additional boat train via the present "European" cross-country route, at least as far as Manchester, if the re-routing goes ahead. Another interesting possibility being considered by BR, which could influence this, is a through train from Southend via North London up the West Coast Main Line.

New-style level crossings have attracted press publicity and adverse comment from some quarters. Branch officers John Brodribb and Trevor Garrod have both had letters in the local press pointing out the advantages of such crossings if used properly. Figures quoted by BR themselves revealed that, of 25 accidents at such crossings over the last three years, 22 were the fault of road users. If further education of road users is needed should it be BR that pays?

The special train from Dereham to Sheringham, organised by RDS and the Wymondham – Dereham Action Committee, was fully booked several days before it ran. Indeed it was one of the most popular events of this year's Dereham Festival and drew press comment for that reason. Plans are now being drawn up to run at least one special from this freight-only line during 1987.

It seems that East Anglia will have to wait at least 12 months for its fleet of new "Sprinter" DMUs. That gives local BR management time to sort out the thorny issue of bicycles on trains. Local

representatives of RDS, Friends of the Earth and the Cyclists Touring Club have met in Norwich to thrash out a common policy on this issue, and we plan to meet BR officials in the autumn to discuss our proposals. It is hoped to secure the best possible arrangements for bicycle carriage on the new trains and to avoid the ill-feeling that has been caused by BR's policies in some areas.

Future meetings of the Branch are:-

Saturday 22 November in Cambridge, with a speaker from the National Federation of Womens' Institutes, dealing with community involvement in the improvement of rail facilities.

Saturday 21 February 1987: A.G.M. in Bury St. Edmunds.

Full details of these meetings are given in the Branch's quarterly newsletter - RAILEAST. Members of other Branches may also receive this, if they wish, on payment of a donation (£1.20 a year is suggested) to:-

John Page, 30, Meadowcroft, Stretham, Ely, Cambs. CB6 3JY.

Trevor Garrod

## NORTH WEST TO EAST ANGLIA SERVICES

By May 1988, the Provincial Services Sector hope to have longer-bodied "Super-Sprinter" multiple-units in service on this axis on a two-hourly frequency. Trains will run from Blackpool via the Windsor Link, or from Liverpool via Warrington to Manchester Piccadilly, thence via Stockport, the Hazel Grove route to Sheffield, and a circuitous route through Derby to Nottingham, Peterborough, and on to Harwich or Norwich. The increase in frequency from the present three trains daily is possible owing to the lower running costs of the DMUs. The locomotive-hauled "European" from Glasgow/Edinburgh via Nottingham to Harwich would be diverted to run down the West Coast Main Line and along the electrified North London Line to Harwich.

Malcolm Goodall.

## NORTH WEST

The Ormskirk to Preston Travellers' Association (OPTA) have just published a 27-page booklet about the work of the Association since its formation in 1981. The booklet, called "The West Lancashire Line OPTA Five Years On, 1981 to 1986", has a foreword by Bryan Wilson, Area Manager, Merseyrail, and consists of four chapters. The first describes the line; this is followed by a detailed look at the recent past of the line, the various campaigns of the Association, and a look at what the future might hold for the line; following this is a look at the special trains run by the Association and the station adoption scheme. The book is good reading for all those involved in

user groups and is available from OPTA at £1 (£1.20 by post) from 15, Stanley Avenue, Penwortham, Lancs. PR1 9RB.

Starting from Monday 29 September BR introduced an hourly service of "Pacer" trains from Liverpool Lime Street to Preston. This service, which is an offshoot of the former Lime Street to Wigan North Western service, replaces the previous erratic Inter-City service, which has been totally withdrawn. Leyland has gained a much improved service to Preston, having previously been closed on winter Sundays.

The new local "Dalesman" service on the threatened Settle to Carlisle line is gaining in popularity. Minibus links have been arranged on a daily basis from Sedburgh to Garsdale and links exist between Hawes and Garsdale as well. Other bus links are in the pipeline. Full details of the "Dalesman" service and the bus links to it are available from Richard Watts, address in Penwortham, as above, telephone Preston 743371.

The Settle to Carlisle Joint Action Committee held a meeting in Kirkby Stephen on Saturday 4 October to debate the future of local services on the line.

Richard Watts

## NORTH MIDLANDS

"There's not much sign of pro-rail activity in Mansfield" wrote a correspondent in "Rail Enthusiast" recently, unaware of the North Midlands Branch secretary's continuing correspondence with British Rail on the subject of restoring trains to Mansfield. However, things improved in July when a press release drew attention to the RDS exhibition on Midland Main Line Electrification and the "Five Shires by Rail" guidebook, which created much interest when displayed prominently in Mansfield Library for a fortnight. The exhibition has toured round Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Northamptonshire since its launch at an East Midlands Branch meeting in May, and contains proposals for new feeder services including one from Nottingham to Ashfield and Mansfield.

In August, the National Union of Railwaymen followed this up by publishing their plans for a Nottingham - Mansfield service extended to Shirebrook, Warsop and Edwinstowe to tap the growing tourist traffic to Sherwood Forest. Local MPs and Chambers of Trade are enthusiastic, but BR remain lukewarm on the idea.

Malcolm Goodall

## YORKSHIRE

The North Eastern Area TUCC have arranged to hold a Public Inquiry into British Rail's proposals to close Woodlesford and Altofts stations on the line from Normanton to Leeds on 24 October

in Leeds and on 25 October in Woodlesford.

A start has now been made on the construction of a new Central station in Rotherham, which, when finished, will obviate the present hike of nearly a mile from the town centre to Masborough station.

The Goole Rail Action Group report that a very good job is being made of the repair of the central jetty of the Swing Bridge. Collisions between passing ships and the jetty still continue apace; in a period of 12 weeks the jetty was struck on five occasions.

At the end of July the Northallerton Chamber of Commerce organized a charter train from Bedale (on the Wensleydale freight line) to Scarborough. Five hundred and seventy people travelled on the train, which took British Rail by surprise and resulted in a train consisting of five two-car DMUs being put together.

Work has now started on building the Stocksbridge bypass and the Woodhead line has been severed by an embankment.

Denis Bradbury

## WALES

The Cambrian Coast Line Action Group's "Sunday Shuttles", supported by Gwynedd County Council, have done well this summer. Three trains each way have run between Pwllheli and Barmouth, calling at all stations and connecting with the Festiniog Railway. Two hundred and eighty-two supported the first Sunday, 20 July, 403 the 27th July and 456 on 4 August, with a profit being made on the last two. A two-car "Sprinter" train is used. The 07.30 (SO) Euston to Pwllheli trains load well, with 11 coaches.

A new Sunday 13.15 hrs. Shrewsbury - Llandrindod Wells and 16.15 return have been provided, the first regular Sunday service on the Heart of Wales line, according to HOWLTA, who provided a trolley buffet service of teas/coffee/sandwiches and served strawberries and cream on the first run on 6 July. The only publicity for the new service was a handbill provided by HOWLTA. Unfortunately the Western Region who run the line only control south of Craven Arms, so Shrewsbury, which is in the Midland Region, does not publicise the route - result, half-empty Sunday trains!

BR have made the 10.55 (SX) Shrewsbury - Aberystwyth and return trip loco-hauled for the summer. The new South Wales - North Wales trains are loading well. BR are pleased with the loadings of the Cambrian Coast Express, the Aberystwyth - London service.

Considerable opposition has been expressed to the de-staffing of Welshpool and Newtown stations.

To celebrate 15 years of dynamic campaigning CCLAG have produced a new book called "Cambrian Coast Line -

The line which refused to die" (story of the campaign to save the line). 48pp., map, 27 photos. £1.75 + 25p postage. Orders to Cllr. Trevor Roberts, 6, Llys Dedwydd, Marine Road, Barmouth, Gwynedd.

Chris Magner

## RAILGUIDES

There are now seven RDS rail-based guidebooks in print – carrying our name and our message into thousands of homes around the country. Each guide is encouraging people to use the rail network of the specific region to explore it – and perhaps to reach some places that they did not think they could reach by rail!

For 1987, work is well advanced on four new titles: SOUTH WEST BY RAIL, LANCS. & CUMBRIA BY RAIL, YORKSHIRE BY RAIL and SCOTLAND BY RAIL plus a third edition of EAST ANGLIA BY RAIL.

Photographs for all these books are still sought; any member who may be able to help with black and white prints (colour for covers) of non-rail and rail subjects, should contact the General Secretary in the first instance.

## PRESTEL for RDS

RDS North Midlands Branch is investigating how British Telecom's PRESTEL information system could be of use to us. Possibilities are:

- (1) Advertise Special Trains;
- (2) Campaign news;
- (3) Press Releases;
- (4) Messages between members;
- (5) Recruitment.

If you have access to PRESTEL please comment on our SYMPATICO bulletins (meetings, groups, events, interests, hobbies) and send a message to John Handcock (Mailbox 283 703654).

Our next move depends on your response.

Simon Hartropp

## CHRISTMAS CARDS

The London & Home Counties Branch has commissioned a drawing of the attractive Wateringbury Station building (which is also reproduced in "Kent & East Sussex by Rail") for this year's RDS Christmas Card. The cost is £1.80 per 10 cards with envelopes. Orders, payable to "RDS London & Home Counties", to Mr I.G.Crighton, 19, Oakdale Avenue, Kenton, Harrow, Middx., HA3 0UJ

H.Trevor Jones

## Improve RDS Ammunition

A vast amount of information is hidden away on member's bookshelves – information which we want to make available in a Resource Bank to help make our campaigning effective and accurate.

Please examine your books, pamphlets, articles and audio/video tapes to see what you are prepared to make available for use by other members and society officers, then fill in and return the form below (or a photocopy).

Details will be collated into a Resource File, later to be printed in booklet form, and a central information store (including a cuttings library) will be set up.

If you are prepared to monitor your newspaper/magazines and send in cuttings, on a regular basis, please volunteer now – with enough help it should be feasible for one member to be responsible for each publication.

Send to R.G. King, Archivist and Research Officer, 4 Christchurch Sq., London E9 7HU (01-985-8548).

### Resource Bank Form for internal bulletin

Do you have resources which you can make available to RDS but which you are happy to store at your home? ..... YES/NO

Roughly      how many books? .....  
                  how many pamphlets? .....  
                  how many audio tapes? .....  
                  how many video tapes? .....  
                  other? .....

Would you be prepared to list them on a form to be sent to you at a later date? ..... YES/NO

Would you be prepared to scan your national newspaper and magazines for useful articles? ..... YES/NO

Would you be prepared to cut or photocopy the articles and send in to the Resource Bank on a regular basis? ..... YES/NO

Which publications would you be prepared to monitor?

Your name: .....

Address: .....

## RDS DIARIES

These are now available at £1.95 plus 25p postage from the Sales Officer (address as for guide book offer). The diaries are finished in maroon, with a gold embossed logo, and measure 95 x 175mm. There is generous space for weekly notes. These are expected to sell quickly, so order yours now while our stocks last. No member should even think of being without one.

## RDS PRESIDENT

The National Executive, at its meeting in July, was pleased to pass a resolution appointing Dr. M.P.L. Caton, retiring Chairman, as the Society's second President in succession to the late Rowland Victor Banks.

## ENCLOSURES

Enclosed with this issue of RAILWATCH is the Public Relations Appeal and the latest edition of the MEMBERS' HANDBOOK. There is no IN PARLIAMENT with this issue.

## Port Ramsgate – RDS Gives Full Support

With the eventual building of the Channel Tunnel it is obvious that there will have to be an alternative crossing to the EEC and beyond. To this end, the RDS Freight Committee fully support the proposals by Port Ramsgate Ltd., to develop and provide new facilities for a range of inter-modal transport opportunities. With the continuing negative approach by a certain Mr Sherwood it is important that, in order to maintain and develop train ferry services, Railfreight International look elsewhere – Ramsgate is the obvious choice.

North Kent is the biggest unemployment blackspot in the South East and the proposed developments will not only secure the 800 jobs created there since 1981 but will also create many more in the future. Railfreight International MUST continue their vital work of train ferry services, as any threat to them would not only dent BR's coffers but affect the nation as a whole.

The RDS Freight Committee has had protracted correspondence with both Thanet District Council and Kent County Council in support of the proposals and hope that, by the time this appears in print, authority has been given for the go-ahead. There has been opposition to the scheme from several quarters, not least from the Southwood Branch of the Labour Party (under T&GWU influence?). Questions being asked by the District Council about potential noise levels, threat to fauna etc., match those of the Stansted Airport Inquiry!

Let us hope that those in the corridors of power, after considering all relevant matters, will come out in support of Ramsgate becoming the number one train ferry. If it is rejected then those responsible will have a lot to answer for.

Steve Wilkinson

## Reopenings – Lessons From Success

New Stations are now, thankfully, a common occurrence, so the opening of South Wigston station on the Birmingham – Leicester line has, perhaps, not been noted by those outside the county. Yet this new station, serving a suburban town of some 10,000 people has a lot to teach us.

Some years ago, at a local enquiry, BR and the County Council both maintained that a station in South Wigston would not pay. There was, then as now, no support from the Borough Council. Thanks though to a tiny band of people with vision, together with changed political ideas at County Hall, the station was reopened this May with some 18 trains each day (both directions). It was originally intended that this station be unstaffed (apart from a peak hour ticket issue). So – after two months service to a town which once boasted three stations –

what has been the result? On July 7th, BR added five extra departures to South Wigston and, at near by Narborough, they are considering full time staffing and stressing the need for a car park. The loadings on the service have been such that the "Sprinter" service has not been able to cope and a charter train, run by the Friends of South Wigston Station, was well over-subscribed. All this for a six-mile ride!

The moral of the story must be that we should never believe those who say that it won't work or that it's too costly/ uneconomic before it's tried. Rather we should use the example of South Wigston and put our case well. Granted we may be wrong sometimes, but, if our arguments are good, that will be rare. Certainly South Wigston shows what can be done and, here in Leicestershire, we will be using it as an example which others can follow.

Darryl Taylor-Smith

## SECTORISATION

BR's reorganisation into five business Sectors has many advantages – but it has also produced anomalies when applied rigidly. Ipswich passengers, for instance, faced a swingeing rise in return fares to London when their station was transferred from Network SouthEast to Inter-City. Red Tape over which sector bears financial responsibility for a particular stretch of line has also hindered efforts to obtain re-openings and service improvements.

RDS is therefore compiling a dossier on OVER RIGID SECTORISATION which will ultimately be presented to the British Railways Board. Any member with local examples for such a dossier is urged to send them to John Saunders, Stockwell Gate, Whaplode, Spalding, Lincs. PE12 6UE.



The Corbyrail North Wales Express at Corby Station on 15th September 1985 – from "Five Shires by Rail"  
(Photo: Jim Wade)

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Mr Cooper is responsible for REGIONAL NOTES, Mr Willson for all other material. To ensure inclusion in the next issue (to be published in JANUARY 1987) all material must be in the hands of the appropriate Editor by WEDNESDAY 12th NOVEMBER.