

RAILWATCH

Railway Development Society

A Voice for Rail Users

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'NO REAL PROBLEM WITH INVESTMENT' RAIL USER GROUPS CONFERENCE TOLD

"It comes as a surprise to many people to learn that investment is not a real problem for BR. Where a proposal offers a reasonable return it is fairly sure of authorisation. "So said Chris Green, Director of Network South East, addressing a capacity turn out at the 8th National Conference of Rail User Groups held in London on Saturday 15th November. This statement is more than welcome, particularly when we learn that over £800m is expected to be invested in Network South East over the next five years - despite what Mr. Green referred to as "day-to-day tightness". The commuter market, according to Mr. Green, is near saturation. Consequently investment will be directed towards improving the standard of commuter services rather than increasing traffic volumes, while the leisure market will increase with the introduction of the one day Capitalcard and the Network Card. There is considerable scope for increased off-peak travel; loading factors are 30% on average.

Regular users, be they commuters or otherwise, ought to be able to look forward to a much improved railway in the future - fewer cancellations, less overcrowding, better timekeeping and improved standards of cleanliness. "Customer friendly" was how Chris Green described his proposals - including plans to stem the considerable degree of "shoplifting" by, perhaps, tough on-the-spot fines on the suburban network; retaining the guard on Inter-City routes would provide both "a friend for the customer" and protection against fraud.

The prospects for further electrification and reopenings were outlined. Electrification schemes in the Network area were now seen as cost-cutting fill-in projects rather than as moves to generate revenue. Nevertheless, lines under consideration for electrification at present include Watford - St. Albans, Royston - Cambridge, Portsmouth - Southampton/Eastleigh, Bedford - Kettering/Corby, Cambridge - King's Lynn, Ashford - Hastings and Tonbridge - Redhill. There are 53 ideas for new stations under review, as is the opening of freight-only routes, such as Oxford - Bicester, to passengers. New stock and

new services complete the picture. The whole Network South East policy could be, perhaps, expressed as "Think Positive - within the money available".

After a question and answer session Conference broke up for lunch and reassembled, albeit in smaller numbers, for the afternoon session.

Don Mathew, transport campaigner of Friends of the Earth, addressed the meeting on the subject of "Transport and Related Environmental Issues". He spoke first of the unjust balance between road and rail spending - the PSO grant was being cut at a time of increased spending on roads. He showed slides of some of the ugliest road schemes dating from the sixties and commented that "an alien and brutal environment produces alien and brutal behaviour". There are far better ways of tackling congestion - traffic wardens and wheel clamps are much cheaper than new roads.

Recent research had produced evidence against the increased use of the car in the city. In central London 16% of commuting was by car. To increase this by only 5% would entail the demolition of residential areas and historic buildings. Car exhaust fumes had been linked to both high urban cancer rates and acid rain. FOE studies on transport and employment had indicated that major road schemes relocate employment rather than create it; public transport is more labour intensive and enhances employment prospects. Company cars received an annual subsidy of £2bn. The report "Fabric of the Nation" by the CBI has 20 pages on roads as opposed to 11 lines on railways.

It is clear that RDS, FOE and the many user groups have much in common and could (and should) co-operate on transport issues in the run up to the next General Election. The user groups conference is now well established as a major national event for RDS; the number of groups and their membership continues to grow and some even have membership lists which rival those of RDS itself in numbers. We look forward to the continued growth of such groups and an even larger conference next year.

PUBLIC RELATIONS APPEAL

The very latest news we have on this appeal is:

Total received £2002, as a response from 189 members.

Many members have been truly generous and, to these, we are extremely grateful - but every bit as grateful to those who have given something, no matter how small.

There is still time for further donations to be sent to the Treasurer, Bob Wilson, in order to boost the amount available to lobby and advertise.

To all our members - a very big thank you.

WHAT DOES RDS COST TO RUN?

In 1986 the society spent £2077 producing and distributing Railwatch, £1215 on postage at national level, £991 on other national publications (leaflets, posters etc.) - while £1082 went to branches for running expenses. On individual campaigns: £200 was spent pressing for the Dornoch rail crossing while a similar sum was spent putting the case for Midland Main Line electrification.

DEJA VU

There is a remarkable similarity between the leading stories in 'Rail News', BR's house journal, for December 1985 and December 1986. The former carries the headline "BR set to cut government aid by 25%", which headline could apply equally to the December 1986 story entitled 'Demanding but achievable' - telling of further PSO cuts of 25% over the next three years.

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Freight Notes

The Freight Committee has kept up its two-monthly cycle of meetings. At our Leicester meeting in December we were given a presentation on the new rail/road wagon by Tiger Railcar subsidiary Trailer Train Ltd. and were impressed by this technical achievement – a vehicle sturdy and safe enough for rail use, yet versatile enough to practically match road trailers in gross loaded weight and volume. These wagons, of which tank and high-sided versions are also envisaged, may be a means of breaking into the highly-disciplined (and lucrative) retail store distribution sector. We wish Trailer Train luck.

Coal movement continues to preoccupy us in its various forms. We have promoted rail use at the opencast development at Coalburn (near Lanark), objected to heavy lorry movements from mine to power station in the Wakefield and Doncaster areas and are working to make sure that rail is properly considered by the CEBG for its newly-projected coal fired stations in the south (we understand Barking, in London and Plymouth are front runners). We are particularly perturbed by some of the ramifications of the sale by British Coal of 'Southern Depots Ltd.', a number of concentration depots for both industrial and domestic distribution. Those at Godalming, Letchworth, Radley and Wolverton have been sold as going concerns to Charringtons, while Cawoods have taken over Aylesbury, Cheltenham and Stonehouse and a depot in the Forest of Dean; Powell Duffryn has obtained Fratton, Crawley and Cranbrook. We assume that any existing rail business through these will continue.

It is, however, intended to close Luton, Norwich, Southend, Tolworth and Watford depots, while retaining West Drayton only for certain bulk sales. It would seem that it is considered that there are nearby depots to absorb the coal business currently handled by these doomed depots – but, whatever happens, there is going to be a fair amount of extra road traffic generated as local merchants travel, say, from Watford to Neasden, Luton to Aylesbury etc., Presumably the Tolworth traffic will go to Chessington South.

The greatest cause for concern is at Norwich, where there will be no rail-served coal depot. We intend to make representations to Charringtons to have a siding put in at their depot close by the Cromer/Sheringham line at Salhouse. We will also press for the construction of sidings where smaller merchants build up their trade to counter balance the closures. 'Solid Fuel' of October 1986 reports that Mr Ian Fraser's Depot at Manor Park, East London, will soon be reconnected to rail – perhaps he will pick up some of Southend's loss. We urge that a rail use be found for some of the closed sites and that the bulk

handling equipment is not dismantled too hastily.

Some Freight Committee members made a visit to new works in connection with Felixstowe Docks expansion. If BR and the Docks Authorities can be this enterprising it is certain that port and rail expansion will continue in this part of the world – we were most impressed to see new lines and rapidly expanding traffics.

Finally, as always, we ask you to keep your eyes and ears open for any potential freight traffics – and let us know. At the moment we want to know of road traffic flows to and from Germany.

P.Wakefield.

Apology

In Railwatch No. 29 it was stated that Pedigree Petfoods would be running trains shortly to the ex-BSC site in Warrington. We hear from the distribution manager of Pedigree foods that this statement was inaccurate in that they have not yet completed their selection procedure for the North West and, in any case have no intention of using the ex-BSC site for this purpose.

The Editor apologises for any inconvenience caused to Pedigree Petfoods or any other party by this statement, which was published in good faith. We therefore urge contributors to Railwatch to thoroughly check the accuracy of their copy, as the Editorial Board is in no position to check the factual accuracy of all we publish.

Wealden Line Campaign Backed by M.P.s

The well co-ordinated move to re-open and electrify the Uckfield – Lewes railway has received the support of both Mark Wolfson, M.P. and Euro M.P. Sir Jack Stewart-Clark, who has taken up the matter with Chris Green, Director of Network SouthEast. An outline cost benefit study on the proposals, which also involve the reinstatement of the recently-closed Eridge line, is under way by BR.

There are powerful arguments in favour of re-opening and East Sussex County Council have maintained the option to do so for seventeen years by disallowing any development which would interrupt the route of the track bed. The line would be the only alternative route for Brighton line trains should the Ouse Valley Viaduct be closed for six months for repair as, it is rumoured, contractors would demand. Population growth, overcrowding at Haywards Heath, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells and the future advent of the Channel Tunnel are all reasons why it is imperative that this seven-mile section of line is restored.

Wealden District Council, despite objections from Uckfield Town Council,

were due to approve part of the trackbed being incorporated in a new industrial estate, which development would remove any possibility of this vital link ever again being re-opened. After pressure from various quarters, including BR, Wealden District Council agreed to defer planning permission until after the meeting between the Wealden Line Campaign and BR, due on 26 November, had taken place.

As we go to press, we have no way of knowing the outcome. If any member can assist this campaign they should contact Brian Hart, at 32, Alexandra Road, Uckfield, Sussex, TN22 5BE

Meanwhile, the Tunbridge Wells and Eridge Railway Preservation Society, formed over a year ago, now has over 500 members, including M.P., Sir Patrick Mayhew. This Group, with much BR operating experience within its ranks, intends to eventually run a genuine public commuter service between Tunbridge Wells and Eridge, as well as steam enthusiast trains. This scheme should be compared with through electrification as proposed by the Wealden Line Campaign – we await developments with interest.

What RDS told the Monopolies Commission

The London and Home Counties Branch of RDS has responded to a request by the Monopolies Commission, for comment regarding their BR Network South-East Inquiry.

Branch Chairman, H.Trevor Jones, made eight points in all which included the need for greater investment, using cost benefit analysis rather than emphasising cash savings, particularly in Cross London Links. He mentioned the need for better passenger information and revenue protection, the unfair competition between Coach and Rail and the lack of effort by BR to tap cross-country traffic while minimising the number of train changes required for such journeys.

BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE

Did you know that, unlike road transport operators, BR provide and pay for their own police force? That police force is quite small – just under 2000 officers – and has to deal with a variety of crime, like theft and vandalism on railway property, football hooligans etc.,

The 1986 RDS AGM passed a resolution suggesting that an auxiliary force to the BT Police be set up, rather like Special Constables. We have taken this up at a high level, and our Wessex Branch Chairman, Jon Honeysett, (who proposed the resolution) has met senior officers of the force. We hope to report further on the matter in our next issue.



Special train for dignitaries, Rail User Groups and the like (inc. RDS) – Huntingdon Station

Huntingdon Electrics Switched On

On Saturday 8 October, two RDS members, Chris Burton and Paul Clark, were invited by the Area Manager of Cambridge, Mr Mike Donnelly, to join Network SouthEast's special train to promote the start of electric services from Huntingdon.

To match the occasion, Huntingdon station had been well decked out with bunting and to add to the flavour of the day a band played appropriate music. On the platform, guests which included M.P.s, local dignitaries and other interested parties were served with coffee and champagne for the toasts which were to follow. Also present were BR officials, including Mr Chris Green, Director of Network SouthEast. A guest appearance by Ruth Madoc of "Hi-di-Hi" added to the occasion.

Departure was timed for 10.55 and in good time, an immaculate 312 electric unit arrived at the station freshly painted in Network SouthEast colours and displaying a Headboard announcing the electric service. After a few speeches, the train finally departed at 10.58 bound for King's Cross. First stop was St. Neots, followed by Sandy and finally Biggleswade. VIP guests boarded at each point. On leaving Biggleswade we were given the fast line for what can only be described as an impressive run into the Cross.

Arrival was at 11.54 into platform 6, two minutes ahead of booked time. The journey time of 57 minutes from Huntingdon was a creditable performance. One wonders what a 317 unit could achieve with their improved acceleration and 100 mph top speed against 90 mph of a 312 unit?

Impressions from guests I spoke to was one of satisfaction and admiration. I also heard – perhaps tongue in cheek –, why can't British Rail always run trains

like that? Well, perhaps the answer is that with this level of investment they can. One does have to remember however that this was a special run, with all the stops pulled out (sorry no pun meant) and careful observation did reveal that some other trains had been kept well away on the slow lines. However, as far as I am concerned, congratulations to British Rail for bringing Electric trains to Huntingdon. Let us not underestimate the Engineering achievement of this. What other building site is there extending over many miles and with 125mph express trains running through it virtually un-interrupted?

Paul Clark

Firm Price now for Swiss Rail Convention

We are pleased to announce that we now have a firm price of £234 (per person) for the Annual Convention in Basel, Switzerland, from 22-26 June (as announced in the last issue of Railwatch, p.4, col 3) Further information, including a full prospectus, can be obtained by sending a foolscap s.a.e. to:-

Convention Secretary,
RTSC, 206 Alexandra Park Road,
London N22 4UQ
(Closing date for bookings has been extended to 21st March)

Icknield Branch AGM

This will be held at the Turville Room, Civic Centre, Aylesbury at 14.00 for 14.15 on Saturday 14 February. All RDS members are welcome, but only fully paid up Branch Members are eligible to vote. Members wishing to join the Committee should contact Philip Roche (telephone: 0296 23752). A public meeting will follow at 15.00.

We seek members help in obtaining the addresses of all the newspapers and radio stations lying between Didcot and Peterborough.

General Secretary's Postbag

The General Secretary spends from £12 to £20 a month on postage, conducting correspondence with members and outside bodies. Recent correspondence with the latter has included:-

- Seeking assurance from BR's Director of Provincial Services that RDS branches and users' groups would be consulted over timetable changes. We have been told that, while BR are always interested to hear comments on service plans, "the discretion in such matters lies with individual Local Provincial Managers."
- The Advertising Standards Authority and the Department of Transport concerning car advertising which emphasises speed and can encourage drivers to ignore the road traffic law. We are also in liaison with Friends of the Earth on this issue.
- The Channel Tunnel Select Committee on implications for BR.
- Planning Authorities concerning possible destruction of the trackbeds at Tunbridge Wells and Uckfield.
- The Editors of "Modern Railways", "Rail Enthusiast" and the "Morning Star" - who have published his letters.
- The Editors of "The Observer", "The Economist" and "The Sun" - who have not published his letters.

Trevor Garrod.

New SE Guidebook Proposed

The London & Home Counties Branch has agreed in principle to compile another guidebook going westward from "Kent & East Sussex by Rail" to be published not earlier than 1988. The Western boundary and the editor are not yet settled although there is a volunteer for the latter. Until further notice, anyone able to offer suitable material should contact the Branch Chairman at; Flat 2, 11, Guildford Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN1 1SW

The following material will be welcome:-

Whole chapters, by arrangement, covering specific lines and which may be built upon tit-bits of information supplied by the editor or other people;

Paragraphs about particular towns or specific tourist attractions, for inclusion in chapters written by others;

Black-and-white prints of tourist attractions, scenery, or trains in scenic or architecturally interesting locations making pictures likely also to be attractive to non rail enthusiasts (pure railway photography is not really wanted);

Colour transparencies for front and back covers (the front to be a train in an attractive location, the back to be non-railway);

Notes of any potential advertisers.

H.Trevor Jones

PLATFORM

Dornoch Firth

Sir,
Some comments on the Dornoch Firth affair.

First, the benefit from a bridge will be much greater to rail travellers than to road users. This is partly because it's further via Lairg than via Dornoch, but also because an existing road (the A386) presently offers a short cut but will be of little use in conjunction with the new bridge. This road is used by the present bus service (and, incidentally, is quite scenic).

Secondly there is a lot BR can do to promote the North line independent of the bridge. The most important would surely be to revise the Highland overnight trains so that people could go from England (Bristol, Nottingham, Kings Cross after electrification) direct to the north on an early train without having to change at Inverness in the small hours. Another idea would be to run trains by a new curve direct to Thurso - the main railhead for Orkney, Dounray, and the shortest route to John o' Groats - before reversing towards Wick. This would cut costs and although Wick traffic would be disadvantaged, this is likely to happen anyway.

On another point what are Sunday trippers from Shrewsbury to Llandrindod expected to do when they get there? How about introducing a bus there via the Elan Valley to Devil's Bridge and advertising "Round Robin" facilities?

Since when has Selby expanded to embrace Whitby Harbour?

Simon North,
Cambridge.

(The photograph of Whitby Harbour in Railwatch 29 was incorrectly labelled Selby, ED)

South London Line - Still No Improvement

Sir,
A year or two ago I wrote to Railwatch expressing fears about the state and the future of the South London Line (Victoria-London Bridge via Denmark Hill).

Since then very little has changed, bar one or two welcome but minor improvements *. The service still only operates during Monday-Friday peak hours, and one of its intermediate stations - Clapham - is a semi-derelect dump which has some claim to be the most disgusting station in London. Despite its central position in a populous up-and-coming commuter area it has no staff, no ticket office (so season tickets cannot be purchased), no platform shelters, no

timetables on display and is virtually unadvertised and invisible from the road to the extent that many local people don't even know it's there. Yet with a bit of effort and a modest outlay, this station could become an attractive and well-used alternative to Clapham North tube station across the road, where it is always a struggle to get on to a tube in rush hours, let alone find a seat.

I have written to BR pointing this out, but they don't appear to want to know. I fear that the service and its stations are simply being left to rot away and eventually be shut down. If any readers are interested in helping to form a South London Line Action Group, I shall be delighted to hear from them. Otherwise I fear we may lose it altogether.

Graham Larkby
57, Drakefield Road,
London S.W.17

(Count me in as a member of your Group Mr Larkby. Incidentally, Denmark Hill station has improved tremendously since my last adverse comments. This is due, I think, to its role as part of the Sevenoaks line rather than as part of the South London Line ED.)

* See also Regional Notes

Singling

Sir,

I would like to correct two errors in an article entitled "Freight News" by George Boyle which appeared in November's edition of Railwatch.

Firstly, it was the Wrexham to Chester line which was recently singled, not the Wrexham to Bidston line.

Secondly, British Rail knew perfectly well that additional freight was going to use the Wrexham to Chester line and, in spite of this, still insisted on having it singled. The story that the Mickle Trafford to Dee Marsh line had to be reopened because of additional freight is simply not true; it had to be reopened because of the incompetent decision by BR to single the line between Wrexham and Chester.

Dr. John Marek, MP,
House of Commons,
London SW1A 0AA.

Letters to the Editor

The Editor is always pleased to receive letters, articles and good quality black and white prints for inclusion in Railwatch. Opinions expressed by correspondents are not necessarily those of the Editor or of the Society. Letters may be shortened or otherwise altered while retaining the sense of the original.

LEVEL CROSSINGS

After the accident at Lockington, Humberside, last summer, the Department of Transport slapped a ban on the installation of further "open" level crossings. As a direct result of this move BR's plans to complete conversion of crossings between Boston and Skegness, and consequently provide a better service, have had to be shelved indefinitely.

The RDS National Executive has passed a resolution criticising this ban, since open crossings reduce operating costs and make many secondary routes more secure financially. Statistics indicate that the majority of accidents at level crossings are the fault of road users, and so we urge the Department of Transport to educate road users on safer behaviour at crossings.

The resolution has been sent to the Department of Transport, MPs, and the British Railways Board; and is one of the pieces of evidence that RDS has submitted to Prof. Stott's inquiry into level crossing safety.

Study Circle Seminar a Great Success

A select but learned gathering took place on 25 October at the Great Northern Hotel, King's Cross, to hear three key speakers talk about the future of Light Rail in Great Britain - the second Seminar to be held by the Rail Transport Study Circle since its inauguration in the Autumn of 1984. We are only sorry that a mis-print in "Modern Railways" precluded more people from participating.

You can, however, make up for this by writing for a copy of the Report of the Seminar - £1 (incl postage) - from Pat Crane, 206, Alexandra Park Road, London N22 4UG. (Make cheques etc., payable to R.T.S.C.) All those who participated should receive a free copy of the report by Mid January.

RAILGUIDES

RDS has now signed a contract with Jarrolds for them to publish and distribute our next four Railguides: SOUTH WEST BY RAIL, YORKSHIRE BY RAIL, LANCASHIRE & CUMBRIA BY RAIL and SCOTLAND BY RAIL. These books should appear in early May.

Thanks to all members who have so far contributed to them. Some help will still be needed, notably in proof reading, and any member willing to assist here should, initially, contact the General Secretary.

The new books will be available to RDS members at a pre-publication discount (see enclosed leaflet). Meanwhile the existing Railguides are still available from the Sales Officer.

NATIONAL BIKE WEEK 1987

For the past four years, RDS has organised sponsored cycle rides to highlight the "bike-and-train" combination in National Bike Week. We have gained useful income and publicity in this way.

National Bike Week 1987 will be May 16-24 (inclusive). Any member interested in taking part in a sponsored ride or any other suitable activity should contact Trevor Garrod, 15, Clapham Road, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ. Mr Garrod would also be pleased to hear from any member willing to co-ordinate our National Bike Week activities.

A Journey through History

The Docklands Light Railway has produced a set of three attractively illustrated leaflets with the above collective title. The first deals with the Tower Gateway to West India Quay section of the DLR and lists the ups and downs of the former stations at Leman Street, Shadwell & St. George's in the East, and Limehouse. There are sketches of two surviving hydraulic accumulator towers and of the Limehouse Viaduct spanning the Regent's Canal.

The second leaflet, covering the line from West India Quay to Island Gardens, explains the background of the fiercely competitive docks and mixed horse and steam engine operation of the Millwall Extension Railway, as well as the derivation of the station name Mudchute.

The final leaflet deals with the line from West India Quay to Stratford. There are sketches of the surviving Bow Works Carriage & Wagon Shop and Goods Superintendents Office of the North London Railway and accounts of former stations at Poplar and Bow.

Sets of leaflets can be obtained for 75p, including postage, from Docklands Light Railway, PO Box 154, Prestons Road, Poplar, E14 9QA.

GFDC

STOP THE HIGHWAY ROBBERY! - LEAFLET

A new 4-page illustrated leaflet of this title was published at the beginning of November. It asks whether the heavy spending on our road system gives such good value for money as a more even-handed approach involving more investment in the rail network would achieve.

We hope, with our leaflet, to puncture some of the extravagant claims of the Road Lobby, by pointing out some of the hidden costs of over-reliance on road transport.

The leaflet is available from the Sales Officer and is ideal for sending to your MP and local councillors.

REGIONAL NOTES

More Light Rail may follow the Docklands example

The future for light rail is looking brighter as the Docklands Light Railway shows its many advantages, even before a single passenger train has run. Branch Membership Officer, Lionel Boylett, was amongst those invited to view the first vehicle at Poplar station on 10th September 1986, and was delighted with everything he saw. The conversion of certain sections of BR and LRT lines in the London area is being considered. Street running, as originally envisaged for the Bow Church - Mile End section of the DLR, is one possibility for portions of links such as Croydon - New Addington, East Croydon - West Croydon and Finsbury Park - Alexandra Palace.

The East London Line, which will in any event soon need a new signalling system, is a likely candidate for conversion to light rail, according to Mr J.B. Gent, LRT Planning Officer, addressing the Rail Transport Study Circle Seminar on 25th October (reported elsewhere in this issue). Extension from the present Shoreditch terminus into the rebuilt Liverpool Street station has always been one of the Branch's goals.

The DLR, which is due to open for public service in July, will need considerable enhancement in consequence of the increased loadings which will arise when the Canary Wharf development has been completed and the line has been extended westwards to the Bank. Platforms will be lengthened, trains 'stretched' and certain viaducts strengthened. The originally intended western terminus "Tower Gateway" will be retained for the sake of its tourist potential - even after the line has been extended to the Bank.

Opposition to Waterloo as Chunnel Terminus

A strategic Plan for London Transport was launched on 23 September 1986 by the London Strategic Policy Unit - set up to fill the gap caused by the loss of the GLC. "Transport planning in London has been left in chaos" said Cllr. Geoff Williams, Chairman of the Unit's Planning Committee. One of its first acts was to protest to the House of Commons Channel Tunnel Committee against plans for a Chunnel Terminus at Waterloo. A petition asking for an inquiry was held on 23 October. Alternatives being suggested include sending more trains direct to the north and having passport checks made on trains rather than at the terminal.

All these matters are dealt with, either in the Branch's Corporate Plan (reported

in our last issue) or are receiving continuing attention from the Society's Joint Channel Tunnel Working Party with NCIT/T.2000 (London). Progress on discussion of the "Plan" with Network SouthEast management has been hampered by the need to submit further evidence to the Monopolies & Mergers Commission on L & SE Services (which the Branch undertook on behalf of all RDS Branches affected at the close of last year).

South London Line

There have been some minor improvements to services on the South London Line (between Victoria & London Bridge). All trains except one now work right into and out of Victoria - previously several stopped short at Battersea Park - necessitating a tiresome change there. The 3-5 minute mid-journey waits at Denmark Hill have also been eliminated. However the line continues to be one of Network SouthEast's Cinderella services, and has the dubious distinction of possessing one of the capital's most decrepit stations - Clapham. So concerned is the Branch that, at its Committee meeting on 17th December, funds were voted to launch a campaign to form a users' group for the line in co-operation with the London Borough of Lambeth. (See also Letters Page).

RDS Sales rocket at recent Branch events

Sales of RDS Literature have rocketed at the many events which the Branch has either organised (or been associated with) in the last few months of 1986 - to the tune of nearly £80. These have included the GWR Preservation Group's exhibition at Southall on 15/16 November; the RTSC Seminar; Film Show; Branch Meeting with Tunbridge Wells Users' on 26 November, and NCIT AGM on 28th. Future meetings planned include one in Chelmsford (in January or February) and the Branch AGM (Mid-March). Further details will be contained in the next RAILONDON due about now.

Jack Ellis

EAST ANGLIA

The autumn meeting of the Branch, held in Norwich on 20 September, heard a talk by Mr Richard Jones, Railfreight External Relations & Training Manager. Mr Jones gave a very informative account of trends in the rail freight business, identifying growth areas in particular, and explained the Government's financial remit to BR's freight sector.

Saturday 4 October saw a successful

RDS special train, the "Shropshire Adventurer", leave Colchester and pick up at all stations via Ipswich and Bury St. Edmunds to Ely. It then carried some 370 passengers to Kidderminster, from where a second RDS charter train ran up the Severn Valley Railway to Bridgnorth and back. During this enjoyable trip, in excellent weather, a large number of RDS books and other items were sold and the Society gained several members.

Our corporate member the North East Norfolk Travellers' Association ran two more successful special trains in the autumn, and part of the profits from this activity is being used to help station refurbishment on the Sheringham line. Meanwhile, another corporate member, the East Suffolk Travellers' Association, has, with the support of some local councils, helped pay for an additional notice-board at each station from Lowestoft to Ipswich inclusive. These are maintained by Association members to inform local users of ESTA and RDS activities and display local information.

The Branch has expressed concern to BR over changes to the Paytrain system which now require passengers boarding at staffed stations to buy their tickets at the station. While seeing some advantages in this new system, we are critical at the abruptness with which it was introduced and consider that the accompanying publicity could have been much clearer. On the other hand, we are pleased at the news that a One-Day Anglia Ranger is to be re-introduced in January - especially as we protested strongly at its withdrawal early in 1986. It is also good news that a similar type of ticket is being introduced in Lincolnshire.

The committees of the East Anglian, East Midlands and Midlands Branches are working on a paper to put to BR early in the New Year containing ideas on the future development of the Ipswich/Norwich - Birmingham services. Meanwhile, the Lincolnshire Branch, following consultations with their East Anglian colleagues, have sent to BR a set of suggestions for retiming some trains, and including some extra stops, to give better connections between Grimsby, Lincoln and Grantham and various major centres in East Anglia.

Trevor Garrod

NORTH WEST

Wanted - more trains to Clitheroe This was the theme of a public meeting held in Clitheroe on Saturday 1 November. Over 100 people packed the Parish Hall and agreed to form an action group for the restoration of passenger services from Blackburn to Hellifield. The meeting was called by the Settle - Carlisle Joint Action Committee (of which RDS is a member) as part of a series of public meetings along the threatened Settle to Carlisle and Blackburn to Hellifield lines.

Several ideas concerning the expansion of services on the Blackburn to Hellifield line were examined. The main ones were (1) the expansion of DalesRail services to run more frequently and on every summer Sunday, and (2) the purchase of a one-train supplement to the existing Manchester - Blackburn complement and the extension of the service to either Clitheroe or Chatburn with Hellifield or Settle as a longer-term objective.

A full study of the line's potential is being undertaken by the JAC. For further details contact Richard Watts at 15, Stanley Avenue, Penwortham, Lancs. PR1 9RB.

Timetable secrecy

Lancashire County Council has always consulted with the local rail user groups over BR's proposed timetable changes. This year, owing to deregulation, BR has become more sensitive about its draft timetables. BR would only allow Lancashire CC to see them if they agreed to keep them confidential. This meant that the user groups would have not been able to make any comments on them. A campaign led by the Ormskirk to Preston Travellers' Association (OPTA) and involving all the user groups in Lancashire has persuaded BR to change its mind. User groups will once again be allowed to comment on draft timetables provided that they agree to keep them confidential.

Dalesman

The new Dalesman service on the threatened Settle to Carlisle Line continues to do well. During the summer of 1986 an average of 81 people per week were travelling on the 22 extra trains per week. From May 1987 the Settle - Carlisle service is being totally recast and the service to the re-opened stations greatly improved.

West Lancashire Line

Copies of the booklet produced by OPTA on the West Lancashire Line and the work of the Association over the last five years are still available. Priced at £1.00 (£1.20 by post), the booklet is available from Richard Watts (address as above).

Richard Watts

Unions oppose Liverpool Rundown

Following recent reports of considerable changes expected on the West Coast Main Line from May, together with confirmation that train servicing facilities at Allerton and Edge Hill (both in Liverpool) are to be run down, the local branches of NUR & ASLEF have openly accused British Rail of plotting to axe InterCity services from Liverpool. This fear was echoed by one passenger in particular, who recalled answering an on-train survey whilst travelling to London, in which one of the questions asked, "would passengers mind changing at Crewe?"

ing at Crewe?"

In view of the abominable all-stations service between Liverpool and Crewe operated by clapped-out EMUs, undoubtedly the answer given was an emphatic "NO". As usual, BR have denied that there is any plan to swing the axe on Liverpool but stories of innovations and developments elsewhere (eg. the International Train running from Manchester, East Coast electrification and the Channel Tunnel) has given some people the notion that Merseyside is yet again to lose out in the rail stakes.

Mike Breslin

NORTH MIDLANDS Extra Passenger Trains

As part of the continued development on the North West to East Anglia axis, BR introduced a new Sheffield to Ipswich train from 29 September. The prototype class 154 "Super Sprinter", rebuilt from prototype unit 150.002, is to be tested on this working. Connections from Liverpool and Manchester feed the 08.59 departure from Sheffield, the route being via Nottingham, Grantham and Peterborough, with connections available to Cambridge and Norwich. Three hours are available in Ipswich before the unit returns at 15.43, the route being a slightly longer one via Derby, connecting with the 17.10 SX or 17.00 SO from St Pancras to give another London to Sheffield service. An earlier departure from Sheffield and a later departure from Ipswich are still needed to complement the existing services and allow day trips to Norwich and Yarmouth.

Passenger counts suggest that 850 passengers a week use the new Langley Mill station which opened in May 1986. More shoppers' trains have been introduced on Saturdays in the Nottingham area to cope with the growing demand. The 09.17 from Alfreton via Langley Mill to Nottingham returns at 11.10 via Alfreton and Langley Mill to Nottingham from where an additional 15.53 runs back as far as Alfreton. Extra journeys are also operated on the Lincoln and Grantham lines.

From May 1987 the Provincial Sector intends to increase the Birmingham to Derby service to an hourly frequency; on the Midland Main Line, however, InterCity may well economise by ceasing to operate the remaining loco-hauled working between Derby/Nottingham and St Pancras.

Looking further into the future, Leicestershire County Council are looking at the possibility of a rail link to the East Midlands Airport, joined to the Midland Main Line by a triangle to the south of Trent Junction. A circuitous bus route currently links Long Eaton to the airport, which has a growing passenger, freight, parcels and mail traffic. Possible sites for new stations near Nottingham have

been suggested at Colwick on the Grantham line and Sneinton, where the Grantham and Lincoln lines converge. Both would serve new developments on the sites of redundant railway yards. The Branch is continuing correspondence with British Rail and local authorities about the possibility of re-opening colliery lines to passenger traffic between Nottingham, Hucknall, Mansfield, Warsop and Edwinstowe. Although this region has an expanding population, local employment opportunities are declining as various mines close. It should prove possible to run further specials to Wirksworth in future, as the stone traffic has recently resumed.

Special trains from the Derby area

The North Midlands Branch has joined with Venture Rail to help operate their programme of excursions. A DMU train carried nearly 200 people from Derby, Chesterfield and smaller stations to Blackpool on 20 September for the Illuminations, giving 12 hours at the resort. The journey time of 3 hours 20 mins. was over an hour shorter than that of an unfortunate motorist who got caught in traffic jams and walked the last 2 miles to Blackpool with his family!

The success of this train was repeated by a loco-hauled rake of Mk 1s to London from the Matlock line stations, Derby and Long Eaton on 8 November. Nearly 400 passengers enjoyed ten hours in the capital, and are looking

forward to the next excursion this spring.

Malcolm Goodall

EAST MIDLANDS

RDS East Midlands is at present suffering from an all-too-familiar problem, too much work and far too few people doing it. The campaign for electrification has widened its scope, owing to BR's having announced cuts in diesel-hauled stock. Services are already stretched and under pressure, especially with respect to overloading. The good news is that a number of MPs are now getting very concerned and are looking to RDS for a lead.

In Northamptonshire, the battle for Roade and Corby reopenings goes on with the same sort of progress as in past years, viz. nil. Certainly rumours and items of information from the RDS spy network are rife, but neither BR nor Corby District Council, in the case of Corby, are saying anything at present.

In Leicestershire, Croft Parish Council has shown great interest in reopening its station. Here RDS took the initiative and also prepared a detailed questionnaire for sampling purposes. On the Midland Main Line, we now understand that Syston station will be built so that it can be served by both Melton Mowbray and Nottingham trains. This is a great step forward, because previously it seemed highly probable that the station would only be served by the infrequent

Melton line trains. The population is approximately 15,000.

As part of the electrification campaign the Branch has also written to six parish councils between Nottingham and Kettering, encouraging them to work together towards the reopening of their stations and the provision of rail units to serve them. To date, only Desborough has responded.

The Branch is also co-ordinating proposals for the Norwich - Leicester - Birmingham line and the Leicester - Burton-on-Trent line; we also have a lot of work to do in relation to the East Midlands CBI and Chamber of Trades, all of which needs more ideas and more willing workers. How about you?

On Thursday 12 November, RDS member D.Taylor-Smith spoke at a meeting organized with Leicester Spokes (a cycle campaign group). The theme of the meeting was 'Bikes on Trains' which led to a number of stimulating ideas being taken up by both BR's Area Passenger Manager and the Spokes.

Daryl Taylor-Smith

YORKSHIRE

Suggestions are being made that the Tinsley Marshalling Yards, between Sheffield and Rotherham, should be used as an International Freight Depot should the Channel Tunnel be built. As a result of the virtual destruction of the steel industry in Sheffield the marshalling yards are more or less redundant. It is proposed that freight trains from the Continent would run straight through to the Tinsley Yards where customs facilities would be established and the wagons would be dispatched to their destinations in the north, whilst traffic for the Continent would be assembled at Tinsley for direct dispatch. Sheffield City Council have commissioned a £20,000 feasibility study and industrialists and union officials are having talks with British Rail.

Ilkley Parish Council are considering breaking away from West Yorkshire and moving into the Harrogate district of North Yorkshire. The Wharfedale Rail Users' Group are warning that if such a move is made the future of the rail link to Bradford will be under considerable threat of closure. West Yorkshire PTA could well withdraw the million pounds a year which it contributes to funding the local rail services, which means that rail passengers would find themselves paying £200 each extra in fares, whilst British Rail might not be willing to keep the line open if PTA support were to be withdrawn.

RDS member, Christopher Hyomes, has launched a campaign to reopen Thornhill station on the line from Huddersfield to Wakefield and Leeds. Situated about a mile from the centre of Dewsbury, it would be ideal as a "Park and Ride" station for people travelling to Wakefield or Leeds. The new West

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Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority has published a station reopening programme including East Garforth and Frizinghall in 1987, but there are rumours that in the 1987 timetable Dewsbury will lose its InterCity status, which it achieved some years ago after a struggle, although the trains are well patronized.

In September 1986 the West Yorkshire PTA held a one-day seminar to which representatives from rail user groups were invited. The PTA has a very positive attitude to developing rail transport if finance allows. Short-term problems are being considered, such as the operation of the Section 20 grant and timetable anomalies of the kind which are to be found on the Sheffield - Penistone - Huddersfield service.

Denis Bradbury

WALES

The special train service of "Sunday Shuttles" operated during the summer of 1986 jointly by Gwynedd County Council and the Cambrian Coast Line Action Group carried 2200 people between Barmouth and Pwllheli. The Conwy Valley "Sunday Shuttles" also carried good numbers. Gwynedd County Council has joined forces with Cheshire and Clwyd County Councils to fund a £200,000, two-year study into the electrification of the Crewe - Holyhead line.

BR are to invest £100,000 in the Vale of Rheidol line, including a new diesel locomotive and a loop. Radio signalling is likely to be installed on the Cambrian lines in 1988.

RDS Wales asked Merrick Roorcroft, BR Area Manager, Shrewsbury, to issue a Press Release for the new Shrewsbury - Llandrindod Sunday train service. Loadings shot up and over 100 people were carried on some trains. On 7 September a "Sprinter" unit was employed - a "first" for the line and for a Sunday too. Support for the BR-organized Sunday bus service between Aberystwyth and Shrewsbury to connect with the trains was good, relief coaches having been required on some Sundays. Loadings were good in 1986 on the Heart of Wales Line.

Chris Magner

WESSEX

The Branch AGM was held in Petersfield on 27 September, when the Secretary and Treasurer were re-elected and Jon Honeysett was elected as new Chairman. Branch Secretary, Charles Morgan, outlining BR progress during the year, welcomed the new study of Portsmouth - Southampton electrification, the establishment of Southampton Parkway station and the BR/TSB scheme to refurbish Andover station.

RDS General Secretary, Trevor Garrod, assessed the national situation, highlighting RDS progress (notably the

appointment of an Administrative Officer; more publications than ever before; better contacts with BR management and MPs). He listed some important rail improvements, such as the Settle - Carlisle reopenings, the Marylebone reprieve, and the electrification schemes nearing completion, a better deal for bicycles on new trains, and fairer costings of rail compared with road.

Guest speaker was BR Area Manager, Gerald Daniels, who started by analysing BR's then recently published Annual Report. Manpower had decreased by 16% and Government support by £131 million - but there was no perceptible decrease in services. In Network South-East, which included almost all the Wessex area, there were likely to be no more significant staff cuts, and in some cases extra staff would be put in for parcels, ticket offices and inquiries. Objectives for carriage cleaning were being set and achieved and new business was being stimulated. On reopenings, he saw Templecombe as "a flagpost for others to follow". The local action committee had not been put off by BR's initial reluctance, and, following support from the County Council, and some successful excursion trains, the station had reopened permanently and had generated £65,000 in its first year.

Hampshire County Council were also adopting a very constructive attitude over, for example, the Portsmouth - Southampton electrification, but Wiltshire County Council seemed less interested in rail. Another useful improvement to the system had been the installation of a passing loop at Tisbury, on the Waterloo - Exeter line. Although not scheduled to be used on booked services, it was in use practically every day and the service was less subject to delay as a result.

Trevor Garrod

Sevenside Notes

Another Avon scheme for electric trains was published in the "Western Daily Press" on 21 November 1986, headlined "RAILMEN VOW TO FIGHT SCHEME AS

BR CHIEF WARNS NO-ONE WILL PAY FOR IT" and "UNION THREAT TO DERAIL METRO PLANS". The report reveals the existence of a commercial organization "The Advanced Transport for Avon Group" with Mr Richard Cottrell, MEP, as Group Chairman, which has altered the route diagram of the earlier 1980 "Avon Metro" scheme.

Our Branch Committee, not having been consulted, will study the proposals, which seem on initial examination to cover too small an area. The reaction of BR to this proposal to raise £385 million from private investors is reported as being that it has "very low chances of success at the present time". The NUR have commented that they would be opposed to any private company buying into British Rail and that they are not happy with the Tyne & Wear Metro.

With regard to Mr Cottrell's statement that "Traffic chaos and pollution were turning Bristol and Bath into a nightmare", his scheme appears to be much too local in concept as it does not seem to be aimed at commuters by car from Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Gwent, who have not been offered even experimental services by BR from their home areas to convenient stations near workplaces in Bristol suburbs, Avonmouth or Bath. Bus services have clearly not found much public favour, being caught in traffic jams, and the local trains through the Severn Tunnel are so few in number that public pressure has forced the Department of Transport to investigate the construction of a duplicate M4 Motorway Severn Bridge.

We are not satisfied that existing rail routes are used to the best advantage and ideas have been submitted to British Rail and the County Councils. Connections at principal junction stations continue to be unsatisfactory, having been brought to the attention of BR during some 30-odd years. An example is Worcester Shrub Hill, and a request has been made for the Warminster service to work through to Kidderminster.

Eric R. Barbery

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