

# Railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

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90p

## Back to rock and roll

Railway enthusiasts will be delighted to know that "Heritage" diesels are now operating in Wales.

For most ordinary passengers, the prospect of travelling on 30-year-old trains is not particularly attractive.

It is like asking Government ministers to travel around in 1950s Ford Popular cars.

Even though Ministers talk about returning to the "grand old days" of private railway companies, they continue to settle back into the leather seats of 1994 Daimler cars, paid for by taxpayers.

The Heritage trains are operating on the line from Llandudno to Blaenau Ffestiniog although elsewhere in Wales, travellers enjoy, up-to-the-minute comfort of 158 Express trains and various modern Sprinter units.

But rail passengers throughout Britain had better get used to the idea of shake, rattle and roll stock. Since privatisation, the Government has been maintaining a total silence about new trains.

Vast amounts of public money are still being spent on new roads. In Wales, ministers are boasting of spending £650 million on just five limited road schemes.

That would buy 650 of the very latest class 158 Express trains!

Think how many extra rail services they could provide.

Even the Airedale electrification is having to make do with cast-offs from Network SouthEast.

And what new operator is going to invest in state-of-the-art trains when there will be cheapjack old trains on offer.

Remember how the new post-deregulation bus operators scoured scrapyards for junk buses to put back on the roads while the British bus building industry collapsed. There are no safeguards to stop rail oper-



**Museum piece:** Back to the 50s with this class 101 Metro-Cammell diesel multiple unit which dates from 1958 but which is now working ordinary passenger services on the the British Rail branch from Llandudno to Blaenau Ffestiniog.

**Right:** A 158 Express train at Machynlleth which is bringing 1990s comfort to what has been a Cinderella line for years. As one surprised passenger said: "I didn't realise trains were so comfortable now. This is much better than going by car."

ators doing something similar. Train makers Brush axed 300 jobs in August because the Government is STILL prevaricating about new trains for London's Northern line.

It is estimated that the Government's failure to give ABB a follow-on for the Central line trains will cost £60 million. And that is assuming the production line ever gets going again.

Rail travellers are already beginning to report other idiocies imposed on the railways by privatisation.

At Bedford, new information signs have been provided which give details of InterCity and Thameslink trains but completely ignore the branch line trains to Bletchley. Thameslink managers ignored letters from the local user group. Train operators in the former Network SouthEast area have been removing net-

work maps from trains, train drivers were stopped from using a lift - now owned by Railtrack - to get to their second-floor canteen at London Victoria station.

This is the kind of farce that happens after you spend £107 million of taxpayers money on consultants to advise you on privatisation.

Elsewhere money spent by big companies on donations to the Tory party seem to be paying handsome dividends. The Sainsbury supermarket chain is one of the Tory-supporting companies which is trying to wreck the night-time ban on big lorries in London.

The Government has said it plans to allow juggernauts back, in defiance of public opinion. As Labour MP Glenda Jackson says: "Abolition of the London lorry ban is scandalous."

The Government further dis-



tinguished itself in July when people were dying as a result of car pollution trapped by unusual weather conditions.

It issued an appeal to drivers to leave their cars at home. Most drivers did not know of the plea and there was no evidence that ONE driver responded. It is the Government's responsibility to ensure there is a good public transport system so people do not have to use their cars. That means more trains - not appeasing the road lobby.



# £100 for a rail timetable!

In the last issue, we told readers that international rail timetables could be bought from VOT in Sandown. Unfortunately this no longer true. It has become so difficult to obtain timetables that the firm has given up. Night Ferry and Gone With Regret author George Behrend outlines some of the difficulties.

People think you can buy rail timetables like cheese in a supermarket. You can't. It is becoming virtually impossible in Britain to buy timetables for foreign systems.

The Germans and Swiss promote theirs in their own countries and in London. As a result, the Swiss sell 150,000 copies a year.

Others, like the French, think the Ville À Ville (Town to Town) book is sufficient. They sell a paltry 1,500 copies and always insist on sending by overnight courier which costs the recipient a fortune.

I was seriously quoted £100 for an FS Italian timetable recently. Like SNCF, they seem to have never heard of the post. To

compound the problems for an English speaker, officials in timetable order offices usually speak only their own native tongue. They make matters even more difficult by insisting on cash in advance and refuse to accept credit cards. After two firms in Britain, including VOT, gave up selling timetables, I rashly said I would take the job over.

I thought I would at least then be able to obtain the TEN+Timetable, not knowing it had already been axed. The current one runs out on 29 September.

So I apologise to any disappointed RDS members who have not got the timetables they have sought from me.

At least we have the Thomas Cook European Timetable but that has its disadvantages in that it cannot possibly include every train. It has to be selective.

Few people know though that it includes most BR trains, and fewer still that if you want Thomas Cook to book you a ticket, you should make contact with their Oxford

branch. You can telephone British Rail International at London Victoria with timetable queries but they balk at anything complicated. For a complex query, it can be better to send a fax.

Britain has hundreds of travel agents but there are just a few who specialise in rail travel.

There is not much help for potential rail travellers from the media. Travel writers are often warned by their editors against writing about trains and those who do like trains are ridiculed or treated as outcasts.

The media seem unable or unwilling to make the connection between asthma and traffic jams - and to accept the enormous advantages of using the train.

At the moment, 48 million people a year flock to Heathrow. Will the advent of European overnight trains using Eurostars make any difference? Let's hope so.

At the moment, it is exceptionally difficult to find out about sleeping car trains. But seven million passengers used them in Europe last year.

If you've never been in one, my new book *EuroNight-Eurostar* will tell you what you are missing. The pre-publication price is £9. Reserve one now by sending a cheque to Jersey Artists at 9 Station Road, Findochty, Buckie, Scotland AB56 2PN.

The alternative is the enlarged Thomas Cook Executive Timetable but the current issue omits at least half the European sleeper trains.

The disappearance of the TEN Guide is sad. It was the successor to the Wagons-Lits Guide which lasted over a century.

Wagons-Lits enthusiasts have their own society. For details, send an SAE to R Heron, 119 Francis Way, Silver End, Witham, Essex. Tel: 0376 583 553. It has members in seven countries.

Other countries have tried to make rail information readily available. In France everyone with a phone can have a Minitel computer with which they can buy rail and plane tickets and gain access to timetable information.

There are now various computer systems, involved in rail ticketing, including InterCity's Tribute which also handles Eurostar, and France's Resa Socrate, plus the airline system Galileo, Amadeus and Sabre.

The International Union of Railways should be going out of its way to expedite connections between systems - using Hermes - and making information accessible to more travel agents and their customers.

■ What is the longest time you have not travelled on a train? For me it was two and a half years. You can read why in my book *Gone With Regret* which costs £14.99 from Jersey Artists, 9 Station Road, Findochty, Buckie, Scotland AB56 2PN. Tel 0542-832621. There is a 35% discount if you quote your RDS membership. It supposedly "reads like a novel" but as I neither read novels nor possess a telly, I would not know. Incidentally it has a Cuneo cover which has not been published as a print.

## Forza Italia



These 38-tonne intermodal containers could be on the back of juggernauts banging and slamming their way down your street - and other people's streets - all over Europe.

Instead they are being transported safely and sensibly by rail from Manchester to Milan.

It was the first train through the Channel Tunnel run by Allied Continental Intermodal Services which has contracts to carry commodities ranging from paper to steel. It takes 35 hours by rail compared to 60 by road.

The first trains - in June - were over-subscribed and general manager Jean le Vot said: "Customer interest has justified the investment of £48 million in the new purpose-built intermodal wagon fleet."

ACI was launched in 1992 as a joint venture between British and French Railways and Intercontainer, which is a co-operative partnership between 26 European railways.

ACI aims to become the main combined transport operator between Britain and the rest of Europe and by 1995 it will have 1,200 low-deck multi-fret wagons.

Trains will be operated from Glasgow, Manchester, Birmingham and Willesden with guaranteed next-day delivery times to places like Lyon, Avignon and Perpignan.

Fruit juice, detergent, chemicals, cars, wine and spirits are just some of the Anglo-French produce now going by train.

The Potter Group meanwhile will be operating liner trains from Selby and Ely offering a door-to-door service at prices fixed by weight or volume.

ACI and the Potter group are among the Channel Tunnel pioneers who will be exhibitors at the Freightconnection 94 show in London Docklands Royal Victoria Docks (northside) from 4-6 October.

Visitors will be able to use the Beckett extension of the Docklands Light Railway to get to the exhibition. Local station is Custom House. Freightconnection information from 0543 419600.

## The InterCity story

Book review by John Bourn

With over 200 glossy pages, all in colour, this detailed study of a railway business no longer with us is eye-catching, well-designed and, even at £15.99, value for money.

Why then do I feel disappointed with it?

Despite some well-known contributors (Colin Marsden, Brian Perren and Roger Ford among others), the tone of the book is disappointingly like a press release.

InterCity's achievements are lauded, its problems and failures glossed over or omitted. Of course the book sets out to celebrate InterCity and I welcome that, but at times objectivity seems to suffer as a result.

You will find little mention of InterCity's two most recurrent problems, particularly on the East Coast Main Line - punctuality and overcrowding.

Likewise, the chapter on design blandly ignores the many valid criticisms made of InterCity design over the years.

The section on the Mark IV coach, heavily criticised for cramped seats, limited views, claustrophobic ambience due to the tilted body shell and poor ride quality, can only tell us: "Standard accommodation gave a bright and friendly interior with the emphasis on aircraft-type seating arrangements". The normally acerbic Alan Williams was one of this chapter's co-authors!

InterCity has improved over the years. But it has not been an uninterrupted journey and even today there are too many rough edges.

Rejection of the Government's half-baked privatisation plans doesn't have to mean acceptance of the status quo.

As passengers we must fight for a better deal and the basic problem with this book, despite its many positive features, is that it

is written entirely from the managerial viewpoint. If InterCity's passengers had written this book, it would have been less anodyne, less complacent and more interesting.

*The InterCity Story* is Published by Oxford Publishing Company (OPC) £15.99

## Tribute to Edina

By Graham Collett

RDS lost one of its most fervent supporters with the passing in May, following a lengthy illness, of Edina Lewis.

She took a keen interest in London Underground services as well as BR's Inner Suburban routes - particularly those to the north and east of London. Her wise counsel was valued at Branches and User Group meetings, where she was keen to see fair play at all times.

Edina took a very active role and was often seen helping to run our stall at branch meetings, exhibitions and BR open days. She took part in the "Rail not roads" demonstration in London last year and was a member of the editorial team which produced RAILONDON.

Edina was widely travelled and was still regularly called on to act as a translator at United Nations meetings in New York and Geneva. She contributed to the new RDS book *Europe beyond the Tunnel*. Whatever will we all do without her?

## Appeal for disabled

Would anyone who knows of any recently completed or planned disabled access schemes at stations, and how they were funded, please contact Peter Lawrence, 75 Marl Pit Lane, Norwich NR5 8XN.

TREVOR  
GARROD'S  
VIEW



What did  
you do in  
the strikes?

Like other members who rely on trains to get to and from work, I had a mixture of bus journeys, lifts, overnight stays and working elsewhere during the rail strikes.

I travel to work on a line which has one signal box covering 44 miles of route. Ten years ago, six boxes controlled that same distance. The number of trains is practically the same - except on Sundays when there are now more trains than a decade ago. Like other rail travellers I can see with my own eyes where productivity gains have been made by signal workers and other operating staff.

As General Secretary, I wrote to John MacGregor MP, describing as "unhelpful" his intervention to block a Railtrack offer to the signal workers. I reminded him how their numbers had been halved since the early 1980s and that they saw millions being spent on lawyers, accountants and consultants in order to try to make the 1993 Railways Act function.

I also wrote twice to Bob Horton of Railtrack and Jimmy Knapp of the RMT, urging them to negotiate a fair settlement and making clear our disapproval of the Government's role.

Mr MacGregor did not reply, though his deputy Roger Freeman sent me a personal acknowledgement just before they both left office.

Meanwhile, after five weeks of strikes, the Sunday Telegraph resurrected a tactic that went right back to the 1920s. It discovered "reds under the bed" - a Communist with a

bust of Lenin on his desk and a Trotskyite with a foreign name! These two gentlemen were apparently responsible for the strikes! On 17 July its chief reporter devoted a long article to the subject.

I wrote to the editor pointing out that an analysis of the signal workers' grievances would have been more constructive, and saying that John MacGregor's action was more likely to account for their strength of feeling than the alleged activity of a couple of militants.

My letter was not published. Nor were any others on the subject, for or against. Instead, the following week the Telegraph printed a small report at the bottom of an inside page to the effect that an opinion poll showed the majority of voters held the Government to be most at fault in the dispute.

Another national newspaper, The Guardian, reported my letter to new Transport Secretary Dr Brian Mawhinney sent on 20 July, urging him to make resolving the dispute his top priority "before the patience of the railways' customers runs out".

Perhaps the longer term lesson to be learned from this strike is that a rail system needs skilled operating, engineering and maintenance staff and that they are not fully convinced that the Government values their work or their industry.

□ Trevor Garrod is general secretary of RDS and writes a column every four weeks in the magazine RAIL.



## PLATFORM For your views on the present and future of rail

### Exercising a choice

Thank you *Railwatch*. With my membership of the AA coming up for renewal, your open letters to the AA and RAC (*Railwatch* 60) finally prompted me to do what I have been going to do for each of the last two years - join the Environmental Transport Association instead of the AA.

In recent years I have become increasingly concerned at the AA's claims to be representing its members when making statements on roads proposals and transport policy issues. I have never been consulted by that organisation as to my view on these matters and am pleased to have the ETA as an alternative to a body promoting views I do not support, in my name.

John Sanderson, 14 Jubet Court, Green Lanes, London N16 9ED

### Big issue

Thanks so much for the larger print in the July issue of *Railwatch*. I read it right through this time, and just to prove it, I will make a small comment on Trevor Garrod's remarks to the AGM on page 13.

Local Badger Line charges £35 per annum for a Senior Citizen's bus pass, which gives a 50% reduction on ordinary single and return fares in an area bounded approximately by Bristol, Bath, Wells, Yeovil, Taunton and Bridgwater.

Compare this with the British Rail Senior Citizen's Railcard which gives a 34% discount on most fares throughout the whole of the country.

Michael B Lewis, 19 Brangwyn Square, Wurl, Weston-Super-Mare, BS22 0HU

### New vista

As a new member of RDS, shunted across from the Channel Tunnel Association, I note that you welcome members' opinions.

For a development society though, you appear unaware of the decay that is destroying the British railway system.

We have built a rail tunnel to Europe but our major industrial centres remain unconnected from the markets of their primary customers and suppliers.

I have never had much confidence in the Government's privatisation programme, if you can call it that.

But a development policy that

might have any chance of resurrecting a sound railway system in Britain will have to be based on private capital and Euro finance.

The objectives would be to link all our major centres of industry and population with the continental high-speed railway system.

The strategy to achieve this would entail the construction of entirely new railroads to replace the West and East Coast main lines and the line to South Wales by tracks that can meet continental standards so routing trains from Edinburgh to Rome is as easy as Hamburg to Marseilles.

The existing UK rail network could then provide profitable feeder routes and allow us all at last to recover much of the ground lost to road transport.

That, in my view, would be a development policy worthy of an influential association. It would take between 35 and 40 years to implement, such is the damage done to the nation by policies of past governments.

They have been mesmerised by the false promise of the UK automotive industry which is now dominated by the Japanese.

D A A Fagundini, 6 Alley Park, Dulwich, London SE21 8AE

### Demand in question

The disparaging remarks concerning the lateness of the fast link from London to the Channel Tunnel which you make in your April issue are misplaced.

We do not need a "fast link" in order to increase the speed of travel from London to Paris, since the Waterloo terminal will provide services which are faster, more comfortable and more convenient from London than any alternative form of transport.

No, Sir. The new line will be needed for capacity reasons when, and only when, the existing route cannot cope with the level of demand. This is thought to be about the end of this century.

David Mitchell, MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

### Remember Beeching

While I agree with Tim Mickleburgh (*Railwatch* 60) that Britain's railways are more important than the Channel Tunnel, it needs to be remembered that if the British Government had not been dragged into the project by the European Union, particularly

from the French side, it would never have gone ahead.

From Beeching onwards there have been attempts to close the network down. We should rather look to the Channel Tunnel as a spearhead for other rail projects. Once the Channel is fully operational, Britain's railways will become part of a European network and it will no longer be possible to isolate ourselves from countries who are far more enthusiastic about railways than we are.

Thomas E Rooker, 77 Ruskin Avenue, St Giles, Lincoln LN2 4DE

### Information block

I left England 30 years ago partly because the railways were so unreliable. The non-information grudgingly provided by signs inside the pedestrian overpass at London Bridge was a typical headache. Back in London, I find it still is.

In vain do I look for well-edited colour magazines issued free to rail users by Railtrack, but they seem to have nothing to compare with *Amicotreno* (Milan) and *Via* (Berne) telling the public about changes, improvements and new horizons in Italy and Switzerland.

True, Mr Horton's brigade occasionally passes out a leaflet advertising some new train, such as the recently instituted leisure connection from Waterloo to Wales via Salisbury (where it does not stop). My daughter discovered the existence of this laudable vehicle and managed to obtain a timetable.

On attempting to book a through ticket from a south-east station, she was told that the train didn't exist. Triumphantly waving the timetable she was able to prove that the official was mistaken, but he retaliated by saying that a ticket had to be booked two hours in advance. At Waterloo, she found that there were only 10 people on the train, and after some coaxing and cajolery, she was allowed to board and quite enjoyed the journey. But it does make one wonder whether something is the matter with Railtrack's attitude. Are we proud of our rail service, or should we persuade our officials to buy tickets to Iselle di Trasquera and Delle?

Denis Stevens, Morlen College, Blackheath SE3 0PW

### Misleading words

In reading *Westminster Watch*, one sometimes feels that the

case may be lost because of wrong or at best misleading terminology. Roads, for instance, are constantly opposed by public transport, which includes bus and rail.

Roads are just as much public as trains or local authority bus services. Perhaps the analogy for the roads should be the National Health Service, since both are free - for the most part - at the point of access.

This is emphatically not true of the railways. The delusion that it is always cheaper to go by road or send goods by road might then be dispelled. At least a genuine argument would ensue.

Dr David G Guild, 53 George Road, Edinburgh EH9 1TX

### Whittington reopening

I was disappointed by the attitude of recent letters in *Railwatch*. While I agree this reopening proposal is not a top priority, I applaud the efforts of local people to secure improved rail services. It is praiseworthy that the girls of Moreton Hall School are not only running this campaign, but also their own rail travel agency. Women rely on public transport more than men, but don't usually make their voice heard in transport debate.

I was happy to send a contribution to the Whittington reopening appeal, and wish it every success. RDS policy on reopenings and new construction encompasses a variety of large and small schemes, and is set out in the excellent booklet *A-Z of Rail Reopenings*.

Malcolm Goodall, Albemarle Cottage, Kirklington Road, Eakring, Newark, Notts, NG22 0DA

### CrossRail errors

Far from being a scandal as July 1994 *Railwatch* claims, the decision by Parliament to reject BR's proposals was correct. Just days before rejection, the CrossRail project team held a seminar for railway lobbyists which was attended by several senior RDS members. Considerable doubt about the project's relevance and realism was expressed.

Because it has a policy of non-cooperation with London Regional Transport, BR has blocked by buildings routes where east-west trains can run over re-instated tracks, specifically between the Circle line and Liverpool Street platforms 1 and 2. LRT, in its turn, needs to start earthing the

centre fourth rail on surface routes.

BR always has been apathetic about taking trains across London. How many RDS members recall a Southern manager telling a meeting just before Thameslink opened, that there was no demand for cross-London travel?

The painful fact is that BR could have cooperated with LRT and got the Jubilee link extension combined with CrossRail and the laid route, still within walking distance of the defunct CrossRail, would be under way and at larger than Tube loading gauge.

BR's CrossRail proposals were fundamentally flawed. BR could run Amersham-Folkestone trains but refuses to develop this traffic axis which requires no civil engineering work whatsoever and would take pressure off London Bridge and the hard-pressed Northern line.

The eastern CrossRail exit east of Liverpool Street ignored the existing rail access to the south via New Cross Gate.

CrossRail was also planned at 6 metre diameter. At 7 metres, it could have carried double-deck stock coming from France via the proposed Channel Tunnel fast link.

Lyndon Elias, Analyst, Data Workshop, 10 Sandringham Road, Dulcot, Oxon OX11 8TP

### Liberal initiative

You report all-party support for the St Ives reopening (*Railwatch* 60).

But it is the Liberal Democrats who have gone "full steam ahead" on the St Ives line and a range of railway initiatives across Cambridgeshire.

One Tory councillor is bravely outspoken in support while the rest, I fear, would ditch the project tomorrow if they regained control of the council.

The Labour group is fully supportive while my crew is bashing heads together to speed this up to beat local government reorganisation.

Keep stoking RDS, but please throw a few crumbs at those councillors who really care.

Councillor Donald M Adey, Liberal Democrat environmental spokesman, 12 Station Road, Ely, Cambs CB7 4BS

### Euro doubts

I'm not a great fan of the European Community but I try to be objective in assessing its transport policy in comparison

with our own. I have, over the past few years, seen a number of road schemes with the tag "Funded by grant from the EC" whereas the only public transport scheme I know to have been supported by the EC is the improvements around Waterloo.

Could anyone advise me otherwise?

Martin R Burch, 24 Camelot Court, Arthur Road, Ifield, Crawley, West Sussex RH11 0PB

### Valley appeal

A new passenger service between north and south Wales called the Cymro is proposed for next year and, with a little imagination and investment, this train could be extended over the Vale of Glamorgan line. We must be more inspiring.

Mervyn Matthews, 15 Mumbles Bay Court, Blackpill, Swansea SA3 5AS

### Privatise the roads

The Conservative Government does not practise what it preaches. If it wants a very large reduction in public expenditure, it should privatise the motorways. And to take privatisation to its logical conclusion, it should perhaps privatise A-class roads too. Motorways should be subjected to the same harsh rules of commerce that the Conservatives want to apply to other businesses.

M W Dury, 5 Maida Vale Road, Mead Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL53 7EA

### Thank you all

I would like to thank all officials, branches and members of RDS for their support during my six-year stint as sales officer, as many of the ideas offered were put into practice.

It has been a most gratifying experience, revitalising the sales department and contributing to the expansion and awareness of RDS.

Increased interest in the environment has led to a greater interest in the value of an expanded rail system and a greater awareness of our publications by many bodies sympathetic to our aims who are willing to take up our ideas.

I hope that this trend continues and all will support my successors.

Alan Harwood, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 0DN

## Railtrack's first six months

A senior executive of Railtrack will address the National Conference of Rail Users on Saturday 8 October.

Mr John Ellis, who has become known to millions of TV and radio viewers during the signal workers' dispute, will give an assessment of how Railtrack has fared in its first six months of existence.

Mr Ellis, now production director of Railtrack, has years of BR experience, having been general manager of ScotRail and divisional manager at London Liverpool Street.

There will be plenty of time to ask him questions after his morning address at Friends House, near London Euston station.

Dr Paul Salvesson, rail policy co-ordinator of the London Transport Technology Network - better known as Transnet - is expected at the afternoon workshop sessions.

This is the time when rail users can get together and decide how to achieve improvements to their services.

Fill in the accompanying form and help to shape the future of OUR railways.

### Discount rescue service

The Environmental Transport Association is offering joining discounts of £10 to RDS members. You can contact the ETA, Membership Section S270, at the Old Post House, Heath Road, Weybridge KT13 8RS. RDS members should put the code S270 in the "where did you hear about us", place your RDS membership number in the "affinity reference", delete the standard membership figure of £20 and insert the special RDS rate of £10. RDS may also as a result receive a small commission.

### Cash boost

Nearly £2,000 was raised by the RDS annual draw this year. Most of the £1,900 proceeds will be used in LOCAL campaigning for reopenings or improved services. Branches and users groups should submit claims for projects they want to carry out during the year.

First prize of £400 went to R Walton of Cokermouth, second prize of £200 to G J Allen of Frome, third prize of £100 to Phil Greaves of Otley, fourth prize of £50 to R E Burroughs of Ventnor.

Book prizes went to Philip O'Rawe of Belfast, A R

Spencer of Erdington, Donald N M Simpson of Stoke Poges, B French of Banbury, Mr and Mrs R Bullock of Crewkerne, R Aley of Burnley, Jane Bird of Newtown, Powys, E J Jones of Solihull, Mrs E M Nice of London N22, P Malcolm of Harpenden, Francis Boait of Tibberton, M Walker of Solihull and K R Taylor of Paddock Wood.

### Eurostar reading

Our new book *Europe Beyond the Tunnel* is now available and being delivered to people who have already ordered. It may be late but at least it came out before the Eurostar trains began running! If you plan to use the train and tunnel to explore the continent, this is the book. Published jointly with Leading Edge, it costs £7.95 including postage from Martin Ball, 89 North Wallington, Fareham, Hants PO16 8TJ. Make cheques payable to RDS.

### Tories at top

Two men with no experience of the railway industry, Sir William Francis and William Wilson, were appointed to the British Railways Board in July. Needless to say, they are both Tories.

### Country way

As many ramblers and cyclists concede, using cars to get to areas of beautiful country is contradictory. By using their cars, they are helping to destroy what they want to enjoy.

The least damaging way to visit the countryside is by train, although the Government has made it ever more difficult by demanding service cuts in pursuit of short-term financial savings. Now a one-day conference will address the problems of Walking and Cycling by Train.

Organised by Transnet it will be held at Gloucester on Thursday 13 October. Details from 081 854 5425. Transnet is happy to provide speakers for RDS branches. Their report *New Futures for Rural Rail* is also available at the reduced price of £8 including postage.

Another organisation has produced a 16-page pamphlet called *Bikes and Trains*, giving rail operators advice on how to accommodate cyclists. The Cyclists Public Affairs Group is at 3 Pottery Street, London SE18 4PH. Phone 071 252 3696.



Jacky Barfoot and John Lillywhite have become local heroes. Both have fought to get rail services restored or improved. John can now happily watch the Turbo trains serving HIS local station, Shalford, near Guildford, Surrey. From her home village of Church Lawton on the borders of Staffordshire and Cheshire, Jacky is still fighting hard for better rail services around Kidsgrove.

## Jacky's story

When Reggie - her name for Regional Railways - started mucking about with her local rail services, Jacky Barfoot got angry. And unlike other people who were content just to moan, she started doing something about it. The result was Kidsgrove Rail Campaign.

Its birth was a direct result of Regional Railways' policy to take staff away from local stations and reduce staffing at Kidsgrove in March 1993. RDS member Jacky and Sean Walley, two well travelled rail enthusiasts, were sickened at what they saw happening to North Staffs' rail network.

The first step was a letter to Stoke-on-Trent Labour MP Joan Walley warning her of the impending staff cuts.

Jacky collected names for a petition. No-one wanted the stations to be left without staff. Once the petition was handed in though, Jacky learned that the authorities in Britain are not very responsive to reasoned argument and persuasion. Nothing happened. The stations remain unstaffed.

But Jacky had learned that most people wanted her to succeed. And so a barrage of lobbying continued with letters to "virtually everyone", putting across the argument for restaffing and warning of what was to come. She said:

"We pointed out that the result would be a drop in passenger traffic, an increase in vandalism and a decrease in services. It happened and is still happening and still we argue the fact with the powers-that-be." BR refused to let Jacky attend any meetings and Staffordshire County Council were unwelcoming too. Now though ears are slowly opening.



Jacky Barfoot

The local neighbourhood forum WAS co-operative. She warned: "It is only a matter of time before some bright spark at Reggie Rail decides to serve a closure notice on some of these stations."

She added: "Some of the replies to our letters were hilarious. But the campaign grew and today it has grown into quite a noisy little monster in its own right!"

"Kidsgrove Rail Campaign wants the restaffing of stations, the reinstatement of local services and a better rail and public transport strategy for North Staffordshire," said Jacky.

"Sean and I undertake a variety of tasks. I do the paperwork and promotion, attending meetings, dealing with correspondence and Sean patrols the stations, puts out leaflets, helps collect names on the petitions, assists rail users with train service information.

"Our loyal and unofficial members, a pro-rail band of activists from all sections of society, do what they can.

"So there it is. A little glowing sun in a big nasty black hole, fighting for a bit of light! We hope that with enough pressure, we can force the hand of change. It's slowly working, at least in the case of the local councils, but we've a long way to travel. Wish us luck."

The campaign is funded out of Jacky's income support, so please, anyone writing, send an SAE to help to keep costs down. If anyone can help out, they will be welcomed with open arms. Her address is 9 Congleton Road South, Church Lawton, Stoke-on-Trent ST7 3AJ

# Local heroes

## John's 'job'

I had been a parish councillor for 10 years when I was invited to become the parish transport representative in early 1992.

My first job was a timetable problem with the local bus company over early morning buses and I found by talking calmly with them and not too much complaining, we came up with a plan that suited all.

At this time I joined the RDS, the council itself being a member already. Network SouthEast had meanwhile cut back its stopping trains at our station in the village of Shalford on the North Downs Line.

Without trying to ruffle too many feathers, I commenced a dialogue with NSE officials to try to improve things. I met them on five or six occasions in a month and, as a result, a feasibility study for a park and ride scheme into Guildford using electric traction was put forward. This would have meant electrifying the line from Shalford Junction on the Portsmouth main line. However a similar scheme for a bus park and ride killed this idea off.

The line then became known officially as the North Downs Line and I had to make contact with new managers. We continued, making very little progress until I was advised the line was to be taken over by the Thames Chiltern division of NSE on 5 April 1993.

Much to their surprise I made contact in January 1993 before any announcement had been made.

My standing with the previous management held me in good stead and the new people agreed to an unofficial meeting with me and to working with me after 5 April.

During the next six months I was invited to offices in Reading and at Newbury and site meetings on Shalford station.

Over many working lunches with them I suggested ways an improved service could benefit us all. I mooted the idea that



Crowd puller: Thames manager Nick Illsey addresses the Shalford crowd. Picture: Kenneth M Bryant

we could get sponsorship to adopt the station and the overgrown gardens and approach road.

I also thought an improved service could help passengers who had to walk the long distance from the bus station in Guildford to the railway station. Buses from surrounding villages pass by Shalford station. Also early morning users could leave their cars instead of driving into Guildford.

I talked to them about using the North Downs Line to tempt walkers on to the North Downs and Pilgrim's Way on Sundays if there were stopping trains. A survey had already been carried out on other lines and it was agreed not only to do a survey on our line, but on the needs of the villagers who might use the trains given a better service.

At one of our site meetings I enquired about a small outbuilding and toilet (all that is left of the old London, South Western Railway station).

I was told it was to be demolished. I asked for it to be left because I knew our new village

was desperately in need of a village centre. I then met with PC Dave Thomas who was overjoyed at the idea. I obtained a quote from a local builder, and David Cohen from the Parrot Inn, provided copious quantities of fittings in Shalford. I also tried to get sponsorship to cover the cost of the fittings for the new call to Mark Vaughan, Garden Company, the station.

After over a year's hard work by both Thames Trains and the village, a new service was called, began to provide a hourly service from March 1994. They were able to do this by running the trains from Reading which terminated at 60 miles on to

Shalford station. Thames Trains also produced, jointly with Surrey County Council, a visitors' guide and local



Picture: Kenneth M Bryant

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Shalford station. Thames Trains also produced, jointly with Surrey County Council, a visitors' guide and local

## LOCAL ACTION

### North West

By Robert Cummings

**Value for money:** Electrification of the Manchester-Blackpool line scores more highly than most trunk road schemes when taking into account the social cost and benefits, according to consultants commissioned by Lancashire County Council, Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive and Regional Railways. Electrification of the direct route via Chorley offered the best return.

**Roll on:** Would it be too much to hope that Manchester-Blackpool would be the start of a rolling programme of electrification in the North West, taking in Liverpool-York, Manchester-Wigan and Manchester-New Mills and Marple Rose Hill?

**Road revenue:** The case for electrification of the Manchester-Blackpool route is set to benefit from the construction of a new road! Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council is building a road on land currently occupied by a siding used to turn-back electric trains from South Manchester. Proceeds of the land sale will be used to electrify from Manchester Deansgate station to Salford Crescent as an alternative terminus for the existing electric service. In the short term this will make much better use of the 1988-built Windsor Link between railways north and south of Manchester. The scheme will reduce the mileage of un-electrified railway between Manchester and Blackpool and therefore the ultimate project cost.

**Tierful plea:** The branch has submitted evidence to the Local Government Commission arguing against the proposals to abolish two-tier local government in the shire counties and replace them with unitary authorities. We are particularly concerned about the future of Lancashire County Council which has adopted a very pro-rail stance. If Lancashire County Council is abolished, rail services could be seriously weakened, or at worst, disappear.

### East Anglia

By Trevor Garrod

**More Trains Needed:** A victory against cuts was achieved in June when stops at Eccles Road and Harling Road stations between Norwich and Ely, were reinstated in the 15.55 Norwich-Liverpool train. This had entailed a wait of over two hours for students returning from the city.

**Remember the locals:** Management were trying to give a faster service for passengers making long distance journeys with some tight connections, and clearly a 90-mph class 158 Sprinter on a journey of over 200 miles should not have to call at every village on the way. Extra rolling stock is needed so an attractive local service can be fitted in-between the long-distance trains.

**Priced off:** Insufficient rolling stock was also given by Regional Railways Central as a reason for increasing fares on summer Saturday trains from the Midlands

to Great Yarmouth "to dampen down demand". The East Norfolk and Suffolk Rail Alliance reacted quickly by calling an emergency meeting and writing to local MPs and MEPs.

**Suffolk Rail Strategy:** The study was published in June and incorporated a number of ideas for which RDS has campaigned for some years, such as new stations at Beauford (north of Ipswich) and Cornard (south of Sudbury) as well as increased frequencies on many lines.

**Lifesaver:** I represented the branch at a ceremony on Cromer station on 8 July when a class 150 train was named Henry Blogg after the famous local lifeboatman.

### London and Home Counties

By Keith Dyall

**CrossRail:** The Bill was rejected by a parliamentary committee but it now appears it will be dealt with under the new transport and public works procedures and hopefully the scheme will not be delayed to the extent originally feared. Nevertheless pressure will still need to be applied to ministers and MPs to maintain the momentum of the proposals.

**Distortion:** Bedfordshire County Council has commissioned consultants for a study into alternative proposals for the Luton and Dunstable line. A copy of the study has come to hand and we are concerned it does not appear to be objective and that the various schemes, heavy rail, light rail, and a guided busway are not compared on a fair basis. We have known for a long time that Bedfordshire officials favoured a bus solution. The figures suggest that a guided busway is the best solution but in order to improve times to the town centres the buses are taken off the busway and on to already crowded town centre streets. The busway will have four single-track sections because the formation is so narrow. The study has inflated rail costs, which are estimated to be much higher than other rail reopenings especially the Cambridge-St Ives line with which we can make comparisons. The only two busway schemes we know of, in Essex and Adelaide, have not lived up to expectations and it is generally acknowledged that buses are not as successful in taking people out of their cars as rail. We are preparing a leaflet on Luton-Dunstable and anyone who would like copies should write to me at 77 Millway, Mill Hill, London NW7 3RT. Assistance in our campaign for a rail solution would be welcome.

### Three for Rail

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## North East

By Gordon Barclay

**King Coal:** Rail facilities at Ellington pit have been mothballed following its closure in February with the loss of 1,400 jobs. RDS has requested Railtrack to leave the line in place as there is a good chance the mine may be sold to a private operator.

**Cleveland Switch:** Cleveland County Council is at last showing interest in rail services. A new strategy document lists possible sites for new stations including Guisborough which is not on the rail network, the line having closed many years ago. Other stations include Teesside Park, Norton and Berwick Hills. The county council though looks set to disappear under local government reorganisation.

**A long Yarm:** The cost of the proposed new station at Yarm has risen from £500,000 to £750,000. A new application for finance has been submitted with the hope of a May 1996 opening. The station could be served by the popular Teesside-Manchester Airport trains.

**Help boost membership:** The help of members in the north-east is requested in publicising RDS. You can help by getting your local library or community centre to display RDS leaflets. If you can help, please contact the branch secretary (0870 505958).

**Wensleydale rail show:** Our June meeting in Darlington was well attended. Ruth Anison of the Wensleydale Railway Association gave an excellent presentation of her group's plans for the line. WRA would like to reopen the Northallerton-Garsdale line to passengers in various stages from the East Coast main line connection at Northallerton. The track is still in place as far as Redmire, which served as the loading point for limestone trains until recently. The branch has lobbied local authorities to support the WRA project which would have many benefits for this increasingly popular tourist destination. Ruth gave a unique insight into the importance of transport links to the people living in this beautiful part of Yorkshire.

**Northumberland to stay?** The Local Government Commission has recommended retaining the present local government structure in the county. This will mean that county-wide coordination of public transport will remain. Northumberland produces an excellent timetable book covering all public transport in the county, which is published twice a year. The book is available from libraries and Northumbria Buses' travel centres in Northumberland.

**West to Eastgate:** Despite much internal

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politics, the Wear Valley group look like proceeding with plans to run passenger trains on the Bishop Auckland-Eastgate line. The line will be leased from Railtrack in the early days. We hope plans to run local passenger trains, in addition to tourist services, are not overlooked. Cement traffic may also return to the line which would help remove many heavy goods vehicles from narrow local roads.

## Scotland

By Douglas Smart

**Lang off track:** Politicians and the media failed to make transport a major issue in the Regional and European elections. We nevertheless pointed out that while Ireland is getting £80m from the EU for railways and Belfast is getting EU assistance for a cross-city line, the UK Government has not put a single rail development scheme before the EU. In June the Scottish Press reported that the Scottish Office is resisting an EU multi-million pound plan to upgrade the Stranraer rail line as part of the Ireland-Continent trunk network. If the Secretary of State for Scotland, Ian Lang, cannot bring himself to improve the main railway line in his own constituency, what hope is there for the rest of the network?

**Better:** Two new stations, Wallyford, East of Edinburgh and Sanquhar, have opened. The latter will be an important link with the Southern Upland Way.

**Confusion:** The idiocies of rail privatisation are now emerging. Passengers at Waverley station are confused because lost property from ScotRail trains, InterCity trains and the station itself go to three different offices.

**Cleaning-up:** North Berwick trains were not cleaned for many weeks because ScotRail refused to pay Railtrack washing charges.

**Tenth rate:** People buying first class supplements on a journey from Inverness to York were told to move seats at Edinburgh because the supplements were not valid beyond that point. Another "We told you so" letter to Scottish Tory MPs would seem to be in order.

## Wales

By Rod Fairley

**Parish power:** Kentchurch Parish Council has published a well-researched study proposing a new station at Pontrilas, to combat road congestion.

**Piggyback consortium:** This major study into lorry-carrying trains by MDS Transmodal highlights routes available - with bridge modifications - for piggyback freight services throughout the country and calls, like RDS, for a chord at Shotton.

**Timber on track:** Delivery of timber to Kronospan, Chirk, by rail is to start again in the near future. Kronospan must be congratulated on their return to rail. What companies such as Kronospan would like is a pick-up goods style service to enable train loads to be built up en route. Come back Speedlink!

**Heritage service:** The summer service is being promoted as a "back to the 50s"

experience. A three-car class 101 Heritage unit has been refurbished and painted Brunswick Green. Finance has come from the Conwy Valley Initiative, a consortium of Regional Railways North West, the Welsh Development Agency and local authorities. The Sunday shuttles have again operated for the season with the North Wales Railway Circle providing a scenic commentary.

**Road wasters:** £60 million for the third Dee road crossing at Conna's Quay, £47 million for the A550, Queensferry (Drome Corner) to Woodbank, £200 million for dualing A5 across Ynys Mon. The Welsh Secretary has also said he likes the idea of spending £40 million on an eight-lane highway up Aston Hill, Queensferry (A550), even though it means the destruction of up to 38 houses. There's plenty of money in them thar hills as long as it's for a road! Meanwhile, the railway struggles on with speed restrictions. Some of the track originates from LMS days.

**Missed opportunity:** The rail tunnel under Caernarfon town is being converted into an inner-relief road and a supermarket is being built on the station site. Port Dinorwic bypass means that any reopening scheme will now cost a possible extra £5 million. Meanwhile, local councillor W O Jones, who would not support our scheme, is up in arms over heavy vehicles still going through the town because lorry drivers do not like the long crawl up the steep hill on the bypass.

**Objection!** There were many objectors, some very emotional, at the public hearing in Harlech on the proposed closure of Abererch, Llandecwyn, Tonfanau and Tygwyn.

## Midlands

By Alan Bevan

**Borrowings:** Birmingham's Cross-City line is still suffering from stock problems and staffing difficulties. A few of the new Class 323 trains have been operating but the highly sensitive and sophisticated electronics seem to react or over-react to the slightest irregularity. The gremlins are slowly being ironed out and modifications made to the 323 still in store or at Hunslett Works. Services are thus still being maintained by "heritage" diesel multiple units plus some 308 and 310 electric units borrowed from West Yorkshire and the London, Tilbury and Southend line.

On the Solihull and Shirley lines out of Snow Hill the Saturday services are being operated almost exclusively on borrowed 165 Turbos as the usual 150 sprinters are deployed on holidaymaker services to Skegness.

**Snow Hill:** A settlement was reached by Centro and Railtrack in June on the

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increased costs of the Phase II link with Smethwick. Although reported to be running £3.5m over budget Railtrack has agreed to meet any costs beyond Centro's £25.7m limit. The increase is to cover costs largely required by the Health and Safety Executive. Renovation of bridges is regarded as an essential task prior to train movements and this work, together with signalling, is now being undertaken. Livery St overbridge may have to be replaced and raised to improve clearances. Smethwick West station will close as the new Galton Bridge station will open just a few yards down the line. The new Cross-City services through Snow Hill are now expected to start in October 1995. The through trains will include Malvern to Stratford-upon-Avon and Leamington Spa plus Stourbridge to Dorridge. From October 1994 the Marylebone - Snow Hill Turbo trains will become regular hourly services.

**New Stations:** Centro plans for new stations over the next three years include: **Convention Centre** at the north portal of New Street tunnel costing £3.5m, a new Cross-City line station near Selly Oak Hospital at **Raddlebam Road**, a **Bentley Heath** station north of Dorridge, **Willenhall** east of Coventry, **Winson Green** near Soho depot, and **Bushbury** north of Wolverhampton. In addition there is strong political will to secure the reopening of the Dudley-Walsall line with stations at Dudley Zoo, Great Bridge, Dudley Port Low Level, Wednesbury and Brunswick Park. Funding for this route has been included in the latest balanced package TPP bid to government. At Stourbridge Town the station has been completely rebuilt partly with European grants.

**Trent Valley:** Staffordshire is keenly pursuing the possible extension of services from Hednesford to Rugeley. Jointly with Cannock Chase district council and Centro, the county council has commissioned a study on the scope for electrification of the line from Walsall, new stations and increased train services. Railtrack is also encouraging the extension of trains from Hednesford to Rugeley and it seems that earlier problems of reversals not being allowed on a gradient at Rugeley Town can now be overcome by running to and from Trent Valley. A smart new car park has already been provided next to the intended Town platforms. On the main line however, Rugeley Trent Valley station has from May suffered a reduction in services to just two southbound and three northbound local trains.

**Improvements:** Birmingham City Council and Railtrack have agreed to remove a huge wall separating Hill Street from New Street station (near platform 12 and Fish Dock) and plan to provide a new 10' x 40' see-through glass screen instead. At Walsall station work is underway to modernise and brighten up the platform area in a

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£1.1m refurbishment funded jointly by the European Community and the Passenger Transport Authority. Work is underway to provide closed circuit TV facilities at Northfield, Selly Oak, King's Norton, Chester Road, Dorridge, Solihull, Stourbridge Junction, Cradley Heath, Berkswell and Tile Hill stations.

**Lickey Fiasco:** A high speed train failure on the Lickey incline resulted in a series of fiascos on the evening of 6 June. The 14.30 Paignton-Newcastle came to a stand at 17.50. Eventually the HST and its passengers reached New Street station just after midnight - six hours late and many still far from home. The much-delayed passengers were put up for the night in expensive hotels or provided with taxis. Obviously the failed train also delayed many other trains. Bring back the Lickey banker!

## Lincolnshire

By Paul Jowett

**Map:** A new colour map of the county public transport network has been published by the council.

**Conflict of interest:** The branch protested on behalf of year-round local users when village stops were omitted again on the summer Saturday services to Skegness to encourage lucrative tourist traffic. Regional Railways were reminded that taxes and community charges contributed to the line's modernisation. If the operator had a spare train, a local shuttle could be provided.

**Joint approach:** The branch is asking the county transport officer about the 1990 agreement to modernise the Leaford to Spalding joint line with improved services and new stations. Privatisation seems to have stopped the scheme dead.

**Braced for problems:** Higher Railtrack charges seem to have killed off most of the specials that used to run to Skegness.

**Buyer beware:** People who bought houses on a new estate at Brigg have been complaining about the use of the line from 1800 to 0600 on five nights of the week to shift the stockpile of imported coal from Immingham Mineral Quay. An estate agent reportedly told them the line was closing.

**Switch tactics:** Branch secretary Reg Wood has been appointed to the Lincolnshire Rail Forum and will make sure it does not degenerate into a cosy talking shop or a club for dignitaries sponsored by vested and political interests. As a first step, he plans to press for a study of county freight movements to identify freight that could go by rail.

**Rail for the future:** The East Midlands Regional Planning Forum has published a consultative booklet called Rail 2020. Lincolnshire County Councillor Jim Dodsworth who chairs the forum - and who addressed the RDS annual meeting in May - is calling for more resources to go the area's rail network.

**Correction:** Councillor Dodsworth is a Liberal Democrat and not a Tory as we reported in *Railwatch* 60.

**Up in the air:** Humberside airport is introducing an air - not train service as reported in *Railwatch* 60 - to London City airport.

## Severnside

By Eric Barber

**Loop:** Cross-platform interchanges could be possible at Bristol Parkway if the goods loop is converted to passenger use. Northavon district draft local plan also proposes a road into the station to improve access from Thornbury, Winterbourne and other areas.

**Defensive tactics:** The plan also suggests there should be a new station at Filton Abbey Wood on the site of the old coal concentration depot to serve the new Ministry of Defence headquarters, Hewlett Packard, Du Pont and the University of the West of England.

**Park and ride:** A new train service - planned from Bath to Gloucester with a park and ride station at Bath Newbridge and reopened stations at Winterbourne and Charfield.

**Reopening reason:** Traffic congestion could be the key factor in getting Henbury station reopened.

**Reopening success:** Patronage of Yate reopened station has grown steadily and the car park may soon need to be enlarged. The ex-LMS route to Yate is being developed as a cycle path.

**Rapid transit:** Routes from Bristol Lawrence Hill to Filton and from Bristol Parkway to Bradley Stoke are being safeguarded for future rapid transit use. A spur from Filton to Hambrook and conversion of the Bristol to Severn Beach service to rapid transit is to be investigated.

## Lottery winners

The lucky winners of the RDS monthly lottery were:

May: W W Boyles, Cromer £55.80, John Barfield, London £34.89, Norman Campbell, Loughborough £20.92, E W Dempsey, London £13.95, P B Hutchinson, Watford £6.97, Elisabeth Jordan, Corby £6.97.

June: A L Reid, Edinburgh £54.80, Mrs Mary Redmond, Stack, Essex £20.55, Andrew Macfarlane, Timperley £13.70, Peter Owen, Altrincham £6.85, J L Horton, Stowmarket £6.85.

July: A N Renton, North Berwick £52.20, Mrs P Impey, Cambridge £32.62, Mrs Elizabeth Loyn, Aberystwyth £19.58, R Neville, Llandaff £13.06, D E Williams, Harrow £6.52, Alan Maitland, Durham £6.52.

## Christmas Stocking Filler

A key ring with a leather fob lettered Railway Development Society is now available at an introductory offer price of 85p post free from Martin Ball, 89 North Wallington, Fareham, Hants PO16 8TJ. Make cheques payable to RDS.

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# WESTMINSTER

## Safety quiz

Public Transport Minister Roger Freeman (now shuffled off to the Defence Ministry) said Railtrack has operational responsibility for safety in the new regime on the railways. Responding to a question on 9 May from John Gummell, (Lab Leeds S and Moleley), Mr Freeman said Railtrack would ensure that the already high standard of safety on the railways is maintained and improved.

Mr Gummell suggested any enquiry into an incident in future would concentrate on how to apportion blame and costs among the companies involved — Railtrack, station owners, operating companies — rather than in finding the cause and learning from it.

Mr Freeman said a privatised railway would be as safe, or safer than a nationalised one and the inspectorate would continue to focus on the cause of any accident initially.

Nigel Forman (Con Carshalton and Wallington) wanted an assurance that sufficient provision would be made for infrastructure investment once Railtrack was fully operational. Mr Freeman: "As a result of the reforms, Railtrack's investment budget, higher than for comparable types of investment last year by BR, will be protected by its own depreciation flow. Therefore it will generate sufficient funds to maintain a high level of investment in infrastructure. We expect that to be £500 million this year, £600 million next and £750 million the year after."

Brian Wilson (Lab Canningham N) said: "The biggest threat to rail safety is the wanton breaking up of experienced teams of railway workers. How does the minister defend the fact that £303 million of taxpayers' money has been spent on redundancy pay and early retirement for 13,000 workers?"

Mr Freeman replied that 13,000 staff redundancies, with no effect at all on the operational efficiency of the railways, is a good investment. During a debate about escalators on London Underground, the Minister for Transport in London Steven Norris said the Home Secretary is being asked to amend the regulations so that wooden escalators can still be used beyond 1 January 1996, the deadline given at the Fennell enquiry into the King's Cross fire.

In the same debate Nick Raynsford (Lab Greenwich) suggested the delay was due to investment in LUL being cut by £1 billion since the last election. Mr Norris denied this.

## Road programme

Transport Secretary John MacGregor, replying to Anthony Coombs (Con Wyre Forest) who had been pleading for the Kidderminster-Hagley bypass to have a higher priority, said: "Contrary to what Opposition members say, I know there is a great demand for our road programme, and that is why we are continuing with a major programme. Alas there are so many requests from around the country that it is necessary to prioritise. Despite the high level of road building in which we are engaged, it is not possible to build all the roads at once or even within the next five or six years."

## CrossRail

In a statement on CrossRail on 20 June, Mr Norris said the Government was disappointed by the Private Bill Committee's decision and was considering how best to proceed. He appreciated the importance of the scheme and said it was for the promoters to find a way forward. David Lidington (Con Aylesbury) asked if Mr Norris had had time to study the representations from business and commercial organisations in London and the South East, and

the united view of local authorities across party political lines, which remains firmly that CrossRail is needed in the national interest and that of our capital city and the South East in general.

Mr Norris: "It is a shame that in examining how this condition might have been brought about, the role of the Liberal Democrat council of Tower Hamlets should have been so extraordinary. The Liberal Democrats' public national policy is to favour public transport and to be dreadfully anti-car, but it wants to make sure these public transport schemes never come near a Liberal controlled council!"

Nigel Spearing (Lab Newham S) asked if the minister makes a distinction between a link between CrossRail and suburban domestic services on Union Railways to Kent, and a link with a possible Stratford International station. Would not the latter provide useful links to international rail services from central and west London, and add to the already 150 odd stations which would be directly linked to Stratford by fast rail services? Mr Norris replied that considerable complexity surrounded the linkage between CrossRail and other rail systems. He said Mr Spearing rightly drew attention to the difference between a straight link and the exchanges which might be possible in Stratford.

It was pointed out by Tory MPs that the CrossRail Bill was scuppered by two Tory and two Labour members. Mr Raynsford expressed the hope that any alterations needed to the CrossRail scheme, for connections at either end would not be sacrificed for lack of public finance. Mr Norris said it would be up to the promoters to decide how any alterations should be funded.

## Freight

Tessa Jowell (Lab Dulwich) asked: "Will the minister urgently tell the director of Railtrack to undertake a study of alternative routes for freight other than through the centre of London?" She went on to complain of the "misery" caused to thousands of people by increased freight, most of it for places outside London. Mr Freeman replied that Railtrack had been instructed to examine an alternative route via Redhill. He understood the concerns of those

disturbed by rail freight especially at night.

## Gravy train

Joan Walley (Lab Stoke-on-Trent N) asked on 4 July which contractors had received the largest share of motorway and trunk road contracts during the financial year April 91 to April 92. The following figures were given: Balfour Beatty Ltd £95m Tarmac Construction £95m John Laing £59m Tarmac Quarry Products £38m Costain £37m.

## West Coast

Peter Thurnham, the Tory who holds Bolton NE with a majority of only 185, asked on 11 July what progress had been made in the West Coast main line under the private finance initiative. Mr Freeman responded that Railtrack plus a private sector consortium, WCML Development Co Ltd, have since April been carrying out a study aimed at producing design standards for the line, and recommending funding options for the project consistent with the objectives of the private finance initiative. This should be completed by the end of the year when a further competition will then be held for the contract to undertake the work. Contracts are expected to be let mid-1995, and work will start as soon as possible thereafter.

In reply to Alan Milburn (Lab Darlington), asking for the running costs of the Department of Transport, Mr MacGregor said the information was not available "in the form requested".

## Pollution

The recent heatwave has resulted in the world's largest recorded asthma epidemic according to medical experts. High levels of air pollution from motor vehicles was a contributory factor, according to the British Lung Foundation.

Tony Banks (Lab Newham NW) claimed Londoners were "choking to death". Mr MacGregor angered Labour members by claiming that as a result of improvements to vehicle standards, the MoT emission check, and the planned increase in fuel duty, pollution from motor traffic was actually falling!

John Denham (Lab Southampton Itchen) said: "At a time when one million asthma sufferers are at risk from air

# WATCH

pollution, your words will strike everybody as a sign of complete complacency." He contrasted the effort wasted on setting up the hotline for complaints about road cones with the difficulties experienced by those wishing to report polluting vehicles.

Ms Walley, Labour's shadow transport minister, urged Mr MacGregor to work with health and environmental departments and to set standards for and monitor air quality. She blamed the roads programme for increasing and generating more traffic.

Paul Flynn (Lab Newport W) claimed vehicle fumes in congested cities were poisoning people and creating a lethal cocktail for them to breathe.

Keith Hill (Lab Streatham), opened a debate on air pollution in London on 20 July and quoted medical evidence that air pollutants such as ozone, nitrogen dioxide and particulates (PM 10s), cause increases in frequency and severity of respiratory attacks, together with results from surveys showing levels of these to be higher in urban areas.

"If we are to improve air quality, to improve the condition of those with respiratory illnesses and, in practice, save lives, our overwhelming target must be the motor vehicle and the internal combustion engine."

It is on the premise that the internal combustion engine can be cleaned up that the Government's response to this problem lies.

## Poisonous policy

He added: "Catalytic converters, however, do not work until they are warmed up, after about 10 miles, during which time they produce more pollutants than traditional engines. Furthermore three quarters of car journeys in London measure just over six miles. Also there is strong evidence to suggest that the diesel engine, that other great saviour of the car lobby, is responsible for at least 30% of all PM 10 emissions. Department of Transport forecasts of traffic growth of between 83 and 142% by the year 2025, are dangerous in pollution terms. Quite apart from that, even a proportion of the projected growth would seize up an already saturated city.

"The conclusion must be that the number of cars on the roads must be stabilised and then reduced. An essential condition for achieving this must be a properly

invested public transport system. Yet the Government response to this challenge is to cut investment so that instead of the £750 million required annually just to keep LUL roughly at the standard it is now, it is only receiving £346 million.

Mr Raynsford, quoting reports that at times, during the latest heatwave, some London hospitals were running out of asthma medication, said that a traffic increase of 29 to 48% would have catastrophic implications in terms of congestion, degrading amenities for Londoners and increasing toxic emissions.

## The madhouse

"The idea that we should base public policy on a wish to satisfy that level of demand for increased vehicle usage in an area that is already hopelessly over-congested is the policy of the madhouse."

The M25 was envisaged as a relief road that would take traffic out of London. But now congestion is worse and there is talk of a 14-lane super highway. Mr Raynsford referred to the new Labour proposals drastically to cut spending on road building and channel those funds into public transport schemes.

"London requires the modernisation of its rail network. We need modern, comfortable, reliable attractive train services to ensure that people use them rather than bringing their cars



into central London." Labour's policies, said Mr Raynsford, would concentrate on investment in the London Underground, building new links such as CrossRail, improving bus services, restricting car use in central London, as is being done now by anti-terrorist measures, monitoring air quality, with power for local authorities to implement the targets, together with traffic calming schemes and more research into alternatives to the internal combustion engine. New light rail and tram systems such as the Croydon proposals must be encouraged, together with park and ride schemes.

John Austin-Walker (Lab Woolwich) commented: "The Government remains wedded to the roads lobby. We have witnessed indecision, dithering and delay over the Docklands Light Railway extension, the Jubilee line, CrossRail, Northern line upgrading and the Woolwich rail tunnel. But they are prepared to press ahead with the environmentally damaging M11 link!"

"The Government has shown it is unwilling to take the necessary action to tackle the appalling levels of pollution and the risk to health in the capital city. Robert Atkins, Minister for the

Environment and Countryside (a former Roads Minister), in reply said the situation is not nearly as serious as we are sometimes led to believe.

"It is not killer smog. We are talking about incidences of poor quality air on certain occasions. They should not be overestimated in tabloid terms. He said it was still not proven that vehicle emissions cause asthma attacks, but that the Government would continue to take steps to improve vehicle emissions."

Paul Flynn (Lab Newport W) said the minister's attitude and demeanour did not match up to the crisis London faces. The campaign to remove lead from petrol shows the pitfalls of not understanding the scientific issues properly, since this has resulted in increasing the amount of benzene, a powerful carcinogenic, in the atmosphere. Causal links are not established in many cases but the link between smoking and lung cancer took 30 years to prove. However we know that in some areas asthmatic cases have grown by 118% since 1979, and that sufferers are greatly troubled by fumes from cars, and atmospheres with high concentrations of particulates and poisons.

## John drives off in cloud of exhaust

### Comment

By Michael Weinberg

Department of Transport! The road lobby must be delighted with his tricks.

In one of his last speeches, he said: "I know there is a great demand for our road programme." He failed to mention the REAL public demand for better rail services.

At the highest levels of Government the political will to improve our railways is sadly lacking. Ministers pay lip service to environmental concerns, and mouth platitudes about good public transport, but they seem to care little and understand even less. The new faces at the

"Department of Roads": Dr Brian Mawhinney, 54, is the new Transport Secretary. Slough MP John Watts, 47, becomes Minister for Railways and Roads. A former leader of Hillingdon Council, Mr Watts reportedly drives his Jaguar sports car into central London most mornings. He did make a bid to get CrossRail reinstated as a private Bill. It failed. The new transport minister in the Lords is Viscount Goschen who is a "keen motorcyclist". Let's hope some of them will travel by train. Who knows, they might like it.

By contrast, a day after being elected leader of the Labour party, Tony Blair was seen on TV travelling from London to Darlington by train, en route to his constituency.

EDITED BY JACK ELLIS,

MICHAEL WEINBERG AND LLOYD BUTLER



# Cycle of reopening

By Trevor Garrod

More than a thousand people arrived in Clitheroe by train at the end of May when regular passenger services were reinstated - in time for the annual Castle Fair.

Six days later, 60 people travelled to the Lancashire town for the third RDS Conference on Rail Reopenings.

The campaign to bring the trains back to the Ribbles Valley was inspired by the success of the fight to save the Settle - Carlisle line, Lancashire county councillor Denis Golden told the conference on 4 June.

Mr Golden, chairman of the county highways and transportation committee, said it turned their attention to the associated Blackburn-Clitheroe-Hellifield route.

A study undertaken in 1990 of likely usage and costings had forecast that 200,000 passengers a year would use four reopened stations and generate £360,000 revenue.

Capital cost would be approximately £1 million for the 10-mile line. Of this, £830,000 was contributed by the county council, £103,000 by Ribbles Valley Borough Council and £19,000 by the British Rail Community Unit.

Mr Golden warned however that, without the county council, this reopening might not have taken place. The Government is planning to replace large county councils by unitary authorities.

Stephen Cornish, product manager for Regional Railways North West, paid tribute to Richard Watts of Lancashire and Daphne Downing of Regional Railways, who spent hours of their own time going to meetings of parish councils and similar bodies to discuss and iron out problems.

Extension of the service northwards to Hellifield would require an additional Sprinter unit, or reducing frequency between Blackburn and Clitheroe. This extension was a possible future option, but would require £300,000 extra revenue.

Peter Moore, chairman of Ribbles Valley Rail, said his organisation would now become a rail users' association with a five-year plan for promotion and improvement of the line.

For a full report of the Conference please send £1 to: Malcolm Richardson, 135 Braintree Road, Mereside, Blackpool FY4 4SR.



Rail riders: RDS general secretary Trevor Garrod (left), Railwatch editor Ray King and his son Alexander, treasurer David Bigg, Robert Martinez, Agnes Harknett and Clara Zilahi. Picture by Rob Archer

RDS members got on their bikes and took the rail reopening message to Essex Man and Woman in June. The sponsored riders highlighted the case for a rail link between Braintree and Stansted airport.

The 15-mile long new link would take pressure off the notorious A120 road, which began life as a way for Roman soldiers, and also encourage the development of Stansted airport not only by making access easier for passengers but also by allowing the airport to recruit people who could travel in by train to work there. This in turn could prevent some of the awful property exploitation that usually occurs around airports.

The Witham-Braintree Rail Users Association, which is affiliated to RDS, has been pressing the case for the rail link which would have the bonus of providing a new cross-country route from Colchester and Chelmsford to Cambridge and beyond.

The local council has expressed interest in the idea and funding is being sought for a feasibility study. Our intrepid cyclists met Councillor Tony de Freitas, vice-chairman of Braintree District Council, and colleagues, to whom they presented copies of *A to Z of Rail Re-openings* and *East Anglia by Rail*.

After lunch the cyclists rode over seven miles of the Fitch Way, the former trackbed of the Braintree-Bishops Stortford line, which closed to passengers over 40 years ago before Stansted airport was even a twinkle in the Government's eye.

Some members took the train home from the two-platform station in the basement of this building, noting that it had clearly been designed for through-running, let's hope, to Braintree, by the end of the century. It is, incidentally, not envisaged that the new line would follow the old trackbed, but would be generally along the A120 corridor on a more northerly alignment.

The cyclists mostly covered between 20 and 50 miles but the yellow jersey had to go to Richard Pill who clocked up 120 miles with a ride from Bedford to Braintree and back.

Over £300 was raised for the RDS Rail Defence Fund and other good causes. The most recent beneficiary from the fund has been the Settle-Carlisle Railway Business Liaison Group who received £50 towards commissioning research as part of their campaign to have early morning trains reinstated.

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## Paris must wait

Plans for the RDS special trip through the Channel Tunnel have been delayed by the general problems of safety certification associated with the tunnel. The excursions are expected to start in the two weeks before the beginning of regular train services.

## Ideas welcome

The Reopenings and New Railways Committee will be meeting in Birmingham on 19 October. Branches and groups should send items for the committee's consideration to John Busler, The Bungalow, Horton