

Rail veteran farewell

By Nigel Bray

I am sorry to report that former Severnside branch secretary Dick Drew, died on 8 August, aged 91. Born at Battersea in 1918 and going to school in east London, he had a long railway career which began at Bishopsgate goods station. He retired as head of freight for British Rail in the late 1970s.

Dick worked with great skill and enthusiasm for the causes he believed in.

He served as a Labour councillor in Waltham Forest, becoming mayor in 1977.

He continued his involvement in politics when he moved to Bristol in 1993 and he campaigned successfully against the diversion of a bus route away from Temple Meads station.

He helped to shape the rail franchise map of western England by convincing senior industry and political figures that one Greater Western franchise covering former Western Region services in England was preferable to the continuation of First Great Western, Thames Trains and Wessex Trains as separate entities.

He was also a strong advocate of integrated transport authorities for Greater Bristol and for Plymouth and Cornwall.

Even in his final years Dick continued to travel extensively. He visited South Africa in 2007 as a guest of the South African Docks & Harbour Board. In 2008 he went to Scotland to meet the



Picture: WESTERN DAILY PRESS

Dick Drew outside Bristol Temple Meads station

chief executive of First Group. During the Second World War, he was part of the British Expeditionary Force and also served in Egypt.

He later raised funds for Great Ormond Street Hospital which helped treat his daughter.

His son Marc said: "Dad was always very happy. He was busy all the time, very passionate and fought for what he believed in."

Dick's well attended funeral at Canford Crematorium, Bristol, heard tributes to his very likeable and inspiring personality. Many of us feel sure that if he were still with us, he would be at the heart of the battle for the railways.

Links to airports

By Trevor Garrod

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The Railfuture report *Airport Links* continues to stimulate discussion. Copies are still available free of charge from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ (trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk).

One reader has pointed out that many airports have become transport hubs, even for people who are not flying or meeting someone off a plane.

Thus Stansted Airport is also a bus-rail interchange. If you live in Braintree or Dunmow, you can catch a bus to the nearby airport and then a train to Cambridge and beyond.

Is this travel possibility promoted by the operators or by Traveline? Is it appreciated by the airport managers? Additional footfall in the terminal can lead to increased business for the shops and cafes there. We have

also been contacted by Roger Gale MP, whose Thanet constituency includes Kent International Airport at Manston. Some 20 years ago he convened a meeting of interested parties in an endeavour to create a parkway station on the Ramsgate-Ashford line. This facility would serve local people and also, by a shuttle bus, the airport.

Kent County Council has recently completed a study which is encouraging and indicates that the actual costs of such a station might be far lower than many had anticipated.

Mr Gale suggests that development of this airport and its nearby rail link "could take some of the pressure off aviation in the South East."

Public transport links to airports will continue to be a standard item on the agenda of the Railfuture international committee and we are keen to hear more about members' experiences.

LOCAL ACTION

Severnside

By Nigel Bray

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■ ■ Rail land safeguarded

The branch response to South Gloucestershire Council's core strategy consultation welcomed the policy to enhance public transport to "significant destinations" and the statement that disused railway land would be safeguarded for possible future use by passenger and/or freight trains.

■ ■ Reopening is just the start

In view of the concerns raised in 2008 when land at the former Henbury station site was auctioned, we are pleased that South Gloucestershire has now indicated Henbury as a safeguarded station site. We would like to see the restoration of passenger services on the Henbury loop (Avonmouth-Filton) with additional stations such as North Filton and Charlton Common to serve major centres of business such as Bristol Airbus, Cribbs Causeway and Filton Airfield as well as projected new housing.

■ ■ Bristol metro could grow

The council's support for the proposed Greater Bristol metro scheme is welcome but we have reiterated the need for quadruple track between Filton Abbey Wood and Dr Day's Junction to allow efficient segregation of local and longer distance trains. We believe there is a case for extending the metro service to Thornbury via the currently freight-only Tytherington branch line. Intrigued by the inclusion of Pilning as a metro station on the strategy's transport map, despite its current service of one train, Saturdays only, we suggested that it would be more sensible to test the market for peak-hour travel between the locality and Bristol, Filton and South Wales by stopping two or three trains there in each direction.

■ ■ Reopening Radstock-Frome is still a possibility

Following the recent Radstock to Frome railway petition calling for reopening of the line, George Bailey has received a mildly encouraging reply from Bath & North East Somerset Council. Mr Adrian Clarke, the council's transportation policy manager, expressed disappointment that neither the Association of Train Operating Companies or First Great Western had specifically mentioned the scheme in their responses to Network Rail's Great Western rail utilisation strategy consultation. In view of NR's lack of commitment, the council believed its policy of protecting the route for "sustainable modes of transport" was right, as it left open the possibility of reopening the railway if a scheme became financially viable in the future.

■ ■ Chard station site to be protected

Following a report in the railway press that sale of the former goods yard at Chard Junction had "scuppered" plans to reopen the station, the branch contacted Somerset County Council's rail officer, Mr Ryan Bunce, who advised that reopening remained a long-term aspiration of the council and that the land had been bought by the sitting tenant with no change of use. He added that Somerset intended to safeguard the site through normal planning controls. Elsewhere in Somerset, the branch was represented at a meeting in Wellington on 30 June to discuss how the station might be reopened. There is now a need to conduct a survey to assess likely usage.

■ ■ Union man urges support for Bristol-Portishead

Dave Wood of the RMT rail union had an article published in the *Bristol Evening Post* in July criticising the council for planning to spend £48 million on a bendy bus scheme for Ashton Vale to Temple Meads. He urged the council to invest money in reopening the Bristol-Portishead line, which has a huge catchment area, and other parts of the local rail network.

