

# SRUBLUK

## *The Society for the Reinvigoration of Unremunerative Branch Lines in the United Kingdom*

### *The Branch Line Reinvigoration Society*

#### PROGRESS REPORT - MAY/JUNE, 1959.

This Progress Report contains details of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting, which was held in London on 23 April, 1959, and also matters of interest arising at recent Committee meetings. A copy of the Treasurer's report, presented at the Annual General Meeting, is also included.

THE NEW COMMITTEE. The new Committee, elected at the Annual General Meeting, is now constituted as follows:-

<u>Chairman</u> -	G.F.Marley, 42, Hillsborough Court, N.W.6,
<u>Hon. Treasurer</u> -	P.E.Postgate, 173 Barnsbury Road, N.1,
<u>Minutes Secretary</u> -	G.R.Hooper, 124 Queens Road, Buckhurst Hill, Essex,
<u>Membership Secretary</u> -	K.G.Judd, 68, Mayfield Avenue, Orpington, Kent, *
<u>Editor of the Progress Report</u> -	K.G.Judd, 68, Mayfield Avenue, Orpington, Kent,
<u>Ordinary Members</u> -	J.W.Barfield, Central House, Finsbury Square, E.C.2, J.P.Groves, 46 Stone Park Avenue, Beckenham, Kent, J.Mair, 67, Bromfield, Stanmore, Middx, John Topping, 18 Linver Road, S.W.6,
<u>Co-Opted Members</u> -	David Freeman, 24 The Avenue, Loughton, Essex, - Adam Kendon, Balliol College, Oxford, + N.J.Watt, Watt's Folly, Arkesden, Saffron Walden, Essex. -

- \* K.G.Judd is continuing as Membership Secretary for the time being, but will have to hand over in the next few months, since he has become obliged to hive off this, and certain other commitments, for reasons of health.
- + Adam Kendon will be able to give to SRUBLUK affairs/in the coming 12 months, but it is hoped that he will attend Committee meetings as and when he is able, to allow the Committee to avail themselves of his advice.
- = The other co-opted members will attend as and when they are able, and will assist in the work of the Committee generally.

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NEXT REINVIGORATION PARTY - JULY 18 to BLETCLEY, WICKINGHAM, AND BANBURY.  
WATCH OUT FOR FURTHER DETAILS.



THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. took place at Friend's House, Euston Road, London, N.W.1, at 7 pm on 23 April, 1959.

This year, as an experiment, the meeting was held on a weekday evening; the attendance was disappointing, although it is recognised that a large attendance cannot be expected from a National Society such as ours.

The minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting were read and signed, and there were no matters arising.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT. Referring to personalities, the Chairman (Mr. Manley) thanked Mr. Judd for his work as Membership Secretary; also recognition was made of the work done by Mr. Davis as Secretary until he was obliged to move to the North of England for business reasons. We hope to see him again in about 15 months time, however. Although Mr. Davis was obliged to resign from the Post of Secretary and from the Committee, we are looking forward to his return in 1960. Messrs. Wright and Blunett, our Northeastern Committee, were unable to attend this year, but a report of their work for the past year was received, and presented. They report heavy dieselisation in the Northeastern Region and consequently traffic receipts are rising. Together with Mr. Yarrow, another of our active members in that area, they are pressing for improved services on the Darlington-Richmond Line, which depends on the military traffic to and from Catterick Camp. It was proposed that Messrs. Wright and Blunett should receive a vote of thanks from the Society.

On the subject of co-operation with other Societies, the Chairman stated that there was excellent liaison between SRUELK and the Railway Development Association - it was all co-ordination without duplication. In the case of the Franch Line Society, it is hoped that they will soon appoint a replacement of their delegate - Mr. Hurst - who used to attend our meetings. Unfortunately Mr. Hurst is now in West Africa, much to our loss.

Mentioning certain threatened lines, the Chairman said that the direct line between Peccles and Yarmouth (South Town) is threatened with closure; instead trains will run by way of Lowestoft (Central) and Gorleston-on-Sea. This latter line is now being brought up to Main Line Standards. Major Ross-Lewin, one of our members in the area, and who lives at St. Claves, one of the intermediate stations on the direct line, has been in touch with us, and will appear before the next meeting of the appropriate Transport Users Consultative Committee.



As regards the Rugby (Midland) - Leamington Spa Line, the Society have also put their point of view before the relative Transport Users Consultative Committee, and that T.U.C.C. is bearing in mind our representations. It should be mentioned that we receive courteous treatment from this Consultative Committee.

The Chairman then turned to the usual methods of bringing about the closure to passenger traffic of branch lines in which the British Transport Commission has its knife; that is to say, by reducing passenger services almost unobtrusively and breaking connections at junctions so that less passengers use the trains, withdrawal of cheap fares, and of other facilities, so that less, not more, passengers use the trains, and thus the vicious circle is put into motion. Another more subtle method was quoted in the case of the West Drayton - Uxbridge (Vine Street) branch of the Western Region, where all signs in Uxbridge showing the way to the station had been removed, so that not only would intending passengers be unable to find the station without asking, but even if they were to get there they would only with difficulty recognise the building as being a railway station! It was recommended in the report that if any of our members reads in the press of a person or body of persons fighting the cause of any railway line, after determining from the Membership Secretary that the correspondent is not a member of our Society, and if he is not, ask the correspondent to become a member. If any member feels that he or she would like to help the Society in any way the Membership Secretary should be contacted. At the moment the interesting post of General Secretary is vacant; and a member living in or near London will find it a most absorbing activity. There is also the post of Membership Secretary which will fall vacant shortly. Similarly, if any member hears of a line being threatened, the best course of action is to write to the Committee giving details; then subsequently suggest revised and more convenient timetables, opening of new halts or resiting of existing ones, and conversion of some stations into halts whenever possible. It is felt that the Society had not done too badly in trying to prevent closure of several branch lines, although some have closed despite our best efforts. Two branch lines from the same junction which were under the "axe" at one time were the branches from Hemble to Cirencester (Town) and Tetbury; these lines have now not only been



reprieved, but new halts have been opened on both branches, and a vastly improved service has been announced, which will come into effect with the summer timetable this year. It is important to note that in one case, that of the ex-Midland and Great Northern Joint Line which closed on 23 February last, we had at least, through the excellent hard work of one of our members, Mr. L.J. Roll, of Stamford, Lincolnshire, brought home to the British Transport Commission at Ministerial and Parliamentary level the fact that there is a branch line problem, and that there is increasing feeling in the country on the subject.

Certain extracts were then read from the British Transport Commission's case on the Lewes - East Grinstead ("Bluebell") Line, to the effect that nothing had been set aside for the sinking fund - in fact there was no such thing! When our Committee called for figures to prove the B.T.C.'s calculations, none could be produced in support. Incidentally, going on to the matter of costs, in running a branch line it is interesting to note that when an engine of a particular branch line works on another line the total cost is debited to the "parent" branch. It is rather more than coincidence that the parent branch almost invariably appears to be line that the Commission desire to close. Another similar example is that it appears that a passenger ticket issued on a branch is regarded as being revenue of that branch only in respect of that part of the journey which lies on the branch, yet a similar journey

in the reverse direction is apparently not considered to include any branch line element in the fare whatsoever! Because of the Society's outlook and work on branch lines, it is often accused of being unrealistic and of living in the past, but in fact it has a great part to play and a great hope for the future. Striking a cheerful note, the Chairman mentioned that a branch line was being constructed off the North Kent Main Line to Manston, and on the other side of the English Channel, to Le Touquet. For this heartening co-operation between airways and railways we must thank Silver City Airways.

In response to certain questions regarding the private running of lines of standard gauge by Preservation Societies - the question of the Lewes - East Grinstead Railway Preservation Society was evidently mainly in the members minds - Mr. Judd replied on behalf of the Chairman and reminded all present that we are primarily a pressure group, a position which had been determined



by previous Annual General Meetings of the Society. As regards the Lewes - East Grinstead (Low Level) Line, there is not much deterioration at present; it is understood that the Preservation Society are endeavouring to raise money in every way, and gangs will be formed for different departments in the running of the line. Our Society is not concerned with the considerable physical work necessary for the private running of the line; in the opinion of SRUMLUK it is unlikely that the Preservation Society will obtain running powers over the Tunbridge Wells West - Uckfield - Brighton line between Culver Junction and Lewes, and it would be extremely expensive to construct the extra track into Lewes over marshland. There are no platforms or station at Culver Junction, and in any case the population in that particular area is too sparse to warrant such a project. Some years ago SRUMLUK examined the question of independent operation of the Kent and East Sussex Line between Headcorn and Robertsbridge, and although the Kent and East Sussex had its own platform at Headcorn, and would not have involved running of the branch train on B.T.C.-used metals at Headcorn, the B.T.C. would not entertain the question of running powers in Tenterden Station, a distance of 100 yards or less, and any Society taking over that line would have had to build their own station at Tenterden.

In such cases, SRUMLUK approves of the Societies concerned, our members are free to join, but on the financial issue, we have more pressing demands. We will give publicity to such ventures, and trust that it will be reciprocated. As the line between South Croydon and Selsdon, and between Sanderstead, East Grinstead, and Horsed Keynes will be electrified probably about 1962, it will mean that the section between St. Margaret's Junction, East Grinstead (Low Level) and Horstead Keynes will be re-opened to passenger traffic at that time. In any case, this route between St. Margaret's Junction and Horstead Keynes is still being fully maintained, and has occasional special through traffic, such as Race and Ramblers' Specials. Consequently, it is extremely unlikely, in view of the Tenterden precedent mentioned above, that running powers will be obtained over this section. As regards goods traffic, goods trains have to run through East Grinstead (Low Level) in order to reach the yard, so the Tenterden precedent would apply again. Other lines in the East Grinstead area earmarked for electrification are Three Bridges to East Grinstead, Hurst Green Halt to Ashurst Junction, and East Grinstead to Tunbridge Wells West. This will probably be later than 1962.



TREASURER'S REPORT. The Treasurer then presented his report, a copy of which (including the accounts for 1958) is enclosed. He remarked that the accounts now presented an encouraging picture - so different to the situation ruling a year or two ago. It was not now a question of not to spend, but of how to spend, to ensure that the funds were used to the best effect. The chief cause of our good financial health, the Treasurer went on, was expenses incurred by Committee and Co-Opted members, for which such members did not make a claim on the Treasurer. In reply to a query on the amount of bank charges, the Treasurer stated that he considered the amount reasonable in view of the number of debits and credits involved, and taking into account the average balance held over the year. The Society also paid the fares of the journey to London from Sunderland of the two members of our North Eastern Committee - Messrs. Wright and Bluett. Stationery and Printing did not appear in these accounts because although stationery was ordered and received during 1958, the invoice was not received until 1959.

The adoption of the accounts was moved by Mr. Judd and seconded by Mr. Mair, and carried unanimously.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT. A year ago the fall in membership was due largely to resignations of lukewarm or complaining members. When the subscription was increased to ten shillings and sixpence the members who resigned - or did not renew - did not include one active or enthusiastic member, but rather those retiring or those not so keen. During the past year there has been a steady trickle of new members, of whom, unexpectedly, six are from Portugal, where we now have enough members to form a Regional Committee! This has offset the number of resignations. Some non-renewals appear, as in previous years, to consist of people who have either forgotten to do so, or who have lost the Membership Secretary's address. Only 38 members have so far not renewed this year, as opposed to 75 last year, and there have been no nasty letters, or any cases of members complaining that they had received no acknowledgement for their subscription.

We ask all members who are able to do so, to help in correspondence, for there is much interesting work to be done. It is also felt that the members' circulars should be shorter and more frequently issued, say every



two/three months in summer and one/two months in winter, depending on the amount of news available. (This circular is longer than average, of course, because of the details of the Annual General Meeting, which it is felt should be communicated to members in fair detail).

The Chairman then interposed to read out a letter from Mr. Falchikov to the effect that as he was going to University he would be unable to accept the post of General Secretary as he had hoped, but would carry out correspondence regarding railways in the Oxford Area.

The Membership Secretary then continued by saying that Mr. Davis our former Secretary who is much missed, had left London for two nine-months sessions on courses in the North of England, and then, when back in London, would be on intensive training; but would be available for Committee work.

Mr. Hurst, the former Secretary of the Branch Lines Society, a mine of information on many different railway subjects, was in the opinion of this Society irreplaceable; so far, the Branch Lines Society had not appointed a successor to act as a delegate to attend our Committee Meetings. Although in Accra, he is still hoping to arrange branch line trips in U.K. from that far vantage point, and we look forward to his return in due course. A vote of thanks was recorded in respect of Mr. Hurst's assistance in the past.

Mr. Judd advised the meeting that he had been Membership Secretary since the beginning of 1956, and would only be able to do this and act as a member of the Committee for a few months more; he can, however, continue with the job of editing the Progress Reports.

Mr. Hooper, the Minutes Secretary, asked for his correspondence duties to be transferred to other Committee members owing to intensive musical activities that can no longer be ignored, but he agreed to continue as Minutes Secretary.

The subject of the "Bluebell" line was again broached, this time with the observation that it is not far from a major city, and also Brighton and Hove which is a conurbation of considerable size; and that there is good reason for its reinvigoration, even under private enterprise. SRUPLUK understands that not many subscriptions have yet been received by the Preservation Society, which supports our feeling that SRUPLUK's existing stand in such matters would



appear to be the correct one.

Mr. D. Freeman then asked if the subscription might be lowered. The Membership Secretary replied, stating that since the subscription had been increased, the donations that many members send with their subscription have increased too, and there seems to be a general feeling that a subscription of half a guinea was more indicative of a society which means business than a society with a subscription of only 5/-. Members should in this connection compare our subscription with, say, the "Bluebell" Line Preservation Society where the subscription is a guinea. It is felt that if the subscription were decreased, activities would go the same way, and we would lose members.

ELECTION OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE COMING YEAR. Members of the Committee were elected as shown on the first page of this circular; the apportionment of offices to be carried out at the next Committee meeting, in accordance with normal practice.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS. Mr. Freeman enquired about the meeting on 12 April 1959 held by the Railway Conversion League. The Chairman replied that it was well attended, and 120 persons were present in Caxton Hall. It provided a lively debate in which Brigadier Lloyd featured. The Railway Development Association did well in the person of a Mr. Shawl, a barrister, who put up an excellent case. The arguments put forward by Brigadier Lloyd were neither convincing nor impressive. Unfortunately the meeting was somewhat marred by certain railway supporters who expressed their feelings too openly. On the same subject, it is understood that there is shortly to be a television feature between a journalist and Brigadier Lloyd. In this meeting, the Brigadier, assisted by an ex-railwayman from Doncaster, spoke of having special tyres on vehicles engaged in moving heavy goods and passenger traffic. When questioned about concomitant dangers of road speeds and congestion, they were evasive. Riders were put at our meeting by one or two people present that the late Mike Hawthorn met his death on the road through excessive speeding on a moist surface; and that on many German autobahnen roundabouts have been, or are being, constructed in order to reduce the speed of vehicles, and thereby reduce the death roll - with good effect. Which all goes to prove that 80 m.p.h. is safe on a railway, and not on a road.



It was announced that the next reinvigoration party was to take place on Saturday 18 July, 1959; that it would start from London, picking up members en route, for the route Pletchley - Buckingham - Banbury. All members are requested to keep this date free; further details will follow later.

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That, then, is the report of this year's Annual General Meeting. It has made a rather longer circular than usual, but it is hoped that it has put absent members fully in the picture, so that they can see that SRUHLUK has been quite busy during the past year. As regards matters raised at recent Committee meetings likely to be of general interest, the following brief notes will, I think, show that activity is still continuing:-

Cheltenham and Andover. It appears that there is no hope of the Cheltenham end of this route being restored to the Lansdown station; and therefore the through connections to the north from Andover and Southampton appear to have been permanently severed. There seems to be little now that the Society can do, much as we deplore the breaking of this through route.

Reinvigoration Party. After considering the claims of various lines as the venue of our next Reinvigoration Party, it was decided to make it on the Banbury line, as announced above. It was felt that the other main contender - Kenble to Cirencester Town - could now be left since Western Region was now reinvigorating this branch officially, with effect from 15 June.

"Beware of the Plan". It was announced that this manifesto had been re-drafted by Mr. Kendon, and was passed as expressing current SRUHLUK policy; instructions were given for it to be placed in the hands of the printers, and for it to be given a somewhat more attractive format. It is hoped that copies will be available to be sent to members with the next Progress Report.

Officers. Responsibilities were allotted amongst members of the Committee as given on page 1 of this Progress Report.

South Devon Railway Preservation Society. Mr. Mair gave details of a new



Preservation Society for the Newton Abbot - Moretonhampstead, and Feathfield - Exeter St. Thomas Branches, and our member who supplied this news suggested that this new Society be offered corporate membership. The Chairman said that to grant this request would run counter to the appropriate ruling which was confirmed at the Annual General Meeting, although the Hon. Treasurer stated that there should be no objection to "two-way working" as regards the sending of journals and news sheets. In view of the interest recently shown in this subject, it was proposed by the Membership Secretary, and seconded by Mr. Hooper, that -

"In view of the opinions expressed at the last Annual General Meeting, and in correspondence over the last 12 months regarding closer co-operation between certain railway preservation societies and SRUPLUK, with a view to mutual co-operation, the Committee is re-examining the position that SRUPLUK should take up in this matter. It is proposed accordingly to seek the further views of the membership in this matter by publicity in a circular; and to advise the membership the outcome thereof in due course."

Would you, therefore, please return the tear off below, giving your views; and if you want to expand them, please return the tear-off with a short letter for the information of the Committee.

The three courses open appear at the moment to be - (a) No change in SRUPLUK's present position in the matter; (b) Co-operation, and the exchange of information, news sheets, and progress reports, on a mutual basis; and (c) SRUPLUK taking out a corporate membership with the appropriate societies, on a reciprocal basis.

PLEASE RETURN YOUR TEAR OFF TOGETHER WITH ANY ADDITIONAL VIEWS YOU HAVE, TO THE CHAIRMAN SO THAT IT ARRIVES NOT LATER THAN -

15 JUNE NEXT.

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#### SRUPLUK REINTEGRATION SOCIETIES BALLOT.

To be returned to the Chairman, G.F. Manley, Esq., 42 Hillsborough Court, London, N.W.6, not later than 15 June, 1959.

I am in favour of - (a) No change in existing practice.  
(please delete two out (b) Co-operation, and exchange of information.  
of the three alternatives)(c) Full reciprocal corporate membership on both sides.

Name (IN BLOCK CAPITALS) of member \_\_\_\_\_