

## Privatisation – When and How?

Transport was hardly a burning issue in the run up to the General Election and it was extremely difficult, despite brave and repeated attempts by RDS members, to obtain clear and written answers from the Conservative Party as to their intentions, should they form the next government, regarding privatisation of British Rail.\*

Privatisation of BR was not mentioned in the manifesto of that party, which now forms a government with a virtually unstoppable majority of 100, which leads us to surmise three possibilities:

- (1) The Government has no desire or intention to Privatise BR;
- (2) They have both the desire and the intention but, fearing an adverse reaction, dared not unveil their plans until after the election; or,
- (3) The party is split on the issue (as the Labour Party is over the Channel Tunnel) with many backbenchers either supporting rail or fearing loss of their own support in marginal constituencies.

The first alternative is unlikely. Since virtually everything else has been, or will be, sold off it is more probable that the truth is a combination of the second and third explanations. Given that this is so, then Rail can be surmised to be among the last, if not THE last, state industry to be so treated.

Whatever secret plans may be lurking in the Department of Transport we cannot know (until the Queen's Speech) but, in general, we cannot see how privatisation will benefit the user or the industry. The leaflet "Rail Network – OR Rail Fragments", published by RDS just before the election raised a number of questions viz:

Who will coordinate the services of trains operated by different companies? Will this mean an extra layer of bureaucracy – or a return to the days of the Railway Clearing House – and who will pay for it?

What would happen to services which no private operator would wish to run?

Is competition between private companies likely to lead to a better service when the major competition is with other forms of transport?

And, finally, what protection would

there be for consumers in the form of TUCCs and similar bodies?

The benefits of a properly planned and coordinated transport system are undeniable, but privatisation threatens to destroy this aspect of the railways, as deregulation is already doing to the bus industry. As reported elsewhere in this issue, the Tyne & Wear Metro, the very model of a coordinated urban transport system – bus and train complementing each other with the bonus of easy interchange and through ticketing – is now beginning to feel the effects of the new ethos.

Privatisation could take many forms, one of which is that the state would own the infrastructure, ie the track and stations etc., with a number of private companies operating the trains. Another is that the system would operate much as before, but with profitable sectors, such as the Gatwick service and parts of the Inter-City network sold off.

Were the first to happen it is likely, according to a "Sunday Telegraph" article as long ago as January, that no services would survive west of Plymouth and Cardiff, north of Inverness or east of Norwich. The same article also stated that the Department of Transport was "studying the statistical information contained in the Serpell Report".

All this is, to say the least, worrying for the rail user. Fragmentation of the network, with no coordination between companies is as sure to lead to its speedy demise as bus deregulation has already led to elimination of the bus in many parts of rural Wales. The one bright hope is that, given that privatisation of BR is likely to be the last on the list, and is likely to be strongly opposed in many quarters (not least from within the Conservative Party itself), then there is still time to monitor possible privatisa-

\*We have since received a letter from Mr Tebbit's office categorically discounting any plans to privatise British Rail but those members who have read it to date feel it could be open to a number of interpretations – only time will tell!

tion plans, consider their likely effects and make our voice heard on this issue.

The silence of the politicians during the election campaign has not made this easy but we all know what the Conservative Party did the last time it ran to a third consecutive term of office. Will the ghosts of Marples and Beeching return to haunt us in a new more subtle guise?  
KW

### Brixton Meeting paves way for new Users' Group

On the eve of the Election between 20 and 30 users and local authority representatives heard a panel of speakers from British Rail, London Strategic Policy Unit and the two sponsoring organizations (RDS and LPTC) discuss the present and future prospects for the South London Line (Victoria to London Bridge). Most complaints related to the inadequacies of Clapham and Wandsworth Road stations but more particularly the need to change at Battersea Park during the morning rush hour.

BR representative, Chris Austin, explained ambitious plans to provide a new service from Dartford, via Lewisham, – possibly to Clapham Junction – provided the 5 local Boroughs came up with the money. Much would depend on the outcome of June 11. Considerable stress was laid on the need for a SLL station at Brixton. A broadly based Resolution paves the way for a new users' group for the line and we hope to report further progress in the autumn.

Alex Johnson

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## RDS Appointments 1987

Those officers elected at this year's AGM are as follows:-

Chair: Alan Bevan, Vice-Chair: Steve Wilkinson, General Secretary: Trevor Garrod, Treasurer: Bob Wilson, Membership Secretary: Frank Hastlow, Sales Officer: Geoff Kent.

National Executive: John Barfield, Lionel Boylett, Mike Crowhurst, Andrew Macfarlane, John Powell, John Saunders, Douglas Smart, Frank Tomlins, Peter Wakefield and Geoffrey Wyatt.

Dr Michael Caton was re-elected President and two additional Vice-Presidents elected were:- Mrs Winifred Ewing, MP and Mr James Towler.

## Special Responsibilities

Two members of the National Executive have been given special responsibilities.

John Saunders is Commercial Liaison Officer, with special responsibility for maintaining contact with those firms which are corporate members of RDS. He will be producing a regular bulletin to disseminate information and aid discussion of rail matters affecting the firms - like travel facilities for their employees, openings for rail freight and parcels traffic and the scope for firms to sponsor rail improvements.

Andrew Macfarlane is Student Liaison Officer, aiming to increase awareness among students of RDS and its work. We hope to welcome more Student Unions and College/University Railway and Transport Clubs into Membership of RDS and to provide speakers for meetings, material for research etc., Andrew would be particularly pleased to hear from existing student members of RDS, especially with details of Union and Club secretaries.

## Chunnel

An RDS Press Release has gone out urging the Government to agree to, and make provision for, customs and immigration control on moving trains. A letter on this subject has also been sent to all MPs. (See also IN PARLIAMENT).

## Register of Skills

Thank you to over a hundred members who responded to the appeal with the last Railwatch. I now have a very useful register of members with skills, experience and qualifications in such diverse fields as railway operation; electrical, mechanical and civil engineering; sales; computers; law; journalism; local government; civil service; planning; economics; accounting and design.

More volunteers are always welcome. Any RDS branch or affiliated group wishing for advice or help from any of these volunteers should contact me.

Trevor Garrod

# A.G.M. REPORT

This year's National General Meeting of RDS was held on April 25th in Newcastle - further north than on any previous occasion - but still attended by members from Devizes to Dundee and from Glasgow to Tunbridge Wells.

Chairman, Alan Bevan, reported on his discussion, earlier that week, with Transport Minister, David Mitchell, and expressed his optimism that further electrification schemes would soon be given the go-ahead. It was also encouraging that three lines, for which RDS had campaigned, were reopening to passengers this spring. He urged members to press all Parliamentary candidates for their views on rail matters and said that the 2000th member of RDS must be our urgent goal. We were also pleased to welcome Mr James Towler, who had just been controversially dropped by the Government as Chairman of the Transport Users' Consultative Committee (North East).

## AGM Resolutions

Resolutions passed at this year's AGM were as follows:-

1. This AGM calls for a 10 year moratorium on the lifting of track from any BR passenger or freight line that may be closed, thus making future reopening easier. Pointwork or signalling may, however, be removed at junctions.

2. This Society is appalled at the daily toll of lives lost, crippling injuries sustained, the agony to those concerned and the financial losses due to road accidents. The Society therefore asks the Department of Transport to commission a study into the extent to which rail improvements, including the reopening of closed lines, could reduce such accidents.

3. This AGM asks the National Executive to produce a leaflet stressing the need for the rail network to be treated as a whole and opposing any privatisation which may lead to its fragmentation.

A fourth resolution effectively reiterated existing RDS policy on driver only operation (as contained in our leaflet issued in September 1986) and urged that money so saved be used to improve services.

## Membership

At the end of last year we had 1467 members (including corporate members) on our books, compared with 1394 at the end of 1985. This year, recruitment has increased after various drives, including adverts in "The Independent" and "Today".

## Tyne & Wear Metro Surviving Transport Act

Guest speaker at this year's AGM was Mr John Baggs, General Manager (Metro) of Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive. He gave an interesting account of the Metro from its bold planning assumption (later proved correct) in the 1970s.

The system was opened, in stages, from 1980 to 1984, and soon after the opening of the last section came the run-up to the latest Transport Act.

This Act, said Mr Baggs, was a watershed for the transport authority - for the public transport system in Tyne and Wear had been planned as an integrated one, but now they were required to set up their bus operation as a separate company.

Traffic had grown in the early 1980s as more people had access to the rail and bus network - there was a peak of 58m passengers in 1984/5. Since then there had been some uncertainty with bus deregulation, although things had not worked out quite as the legislators had foreseen. Metro had lost some short distance passengers, but gained long distance ones. Transfer ticketing had become less flexible and "the general public have noticed this in their pockets". The travel ticket scheme had, however, survived as a joint operation with the buses.

They now had to account separately for buses and the Metro before subsidies could be calculated. Fares would have to be increased further to reach financial targets, and there would have to be some operating economies, but they also planned to double the track on the Bank Foot branch and part of the South Shields line, introduce computer monitoring of maintenance, improve Gateshead station and introduce an information and data system.

Future expansion, for which there was considerable support, to Newcastle Airport was being studied, as was an extension from Benton to Forest Hill and, possibly, Killingworth.

In conclusion, Mr Baggs felt that a lot of experience had been gained since 1980 and that the original planning decisions had been vindicated. The railway had shown that it could survive under a variety of scenarios, providing a service with comfort, speed, convenience and frequency.

Trevor Garrod



Westferry Station under construction

(Photo: DLR)

## LIGHT RAIL GETS OFF TO A GOOD START

Engineers are working flat out this summer to get the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) in full working order by July 30, when the Queen is due to open it. Next day it is to be in public operation, its 11 2-car articulated trains in full swing. The speed at which the line has been built and its low cost show the great future for light rail that lies ahead. Agreement to fund the line was reached only in October 1982. The cost of building it has been kept within the budget of £77 million.

As things have turned out, the budget may have been too strict. More generous funding would probably have been worth it. The cost compares with an estimate, at today's prices, of £500m, to extend the Jubilee Line tube to Docklands, which was the original intention. The DLR shows the signs of cheeseparating, but its completion has been a remarkable achievement. To what the appetite by showing what the line will be like before it opens, diagrams are displayed at an exhibition in the London Transport Museum, where they will continue until 29 November.

## Example to the country

"It sets an example for many other cities, like Manchester, Birmingham or Bristol," the Managing Director, Cliff Bonnett, told me. Inspired by the former GLC, the building of the line has given such a boost to the development of Docklands - described as the biggest example of urban renewal in Europe - that it has thus created a transport market that must soon exceed the line's own capacity. To cope with the traffic the trains will have to be doubled in length and increased in number and frequency.

main station, is there a really useful connection with both LRT and BR lines. Even in the City terminus, Tower Gateway, there is no physical connection with the adjoining Fenchurch Street station, which has always suffered from being isolated from the Underground.

Employees of City firms, accustomed to convenient public transport, will not be pleased, if their offices move into Docklands, at the prospect of having to travel there when there is no link with the DLR. Developers at Canary Wharf, the heart of Docklands, where there will be maximum demand for transport, insist on funding a connection between the DLR and Bank tube station, which will leave the present Tower Gateway terminus isolated.

This will be very expensive and take several years to do. Mr Bonnett advised building a simpler and cheaper link with the District Line, say at Tower Hill, but the Canary Wharf people were insistent on linking with the heart of the City.

## Tunnel problems

To make matters worse, the DLR trains have panoramic windows and no doors at each end, not having been designed for tube tunnels. Now the mile-long tunnels must be made wide enough for walkways at the side of the train, to enable passengers to use them in an emergency. Bank station itself will be totally redesigned.

The same lightweight trains will use the City extension as the rest of the DLR; the one pictured is seen approaching Island Gardens, the terminus on the Isle of Dogs which adjoins the subway to Greenwich. Despite its rather unattractive box-like shape, the interior is comfortable and agreeable, and is said to enjoy outstandingly pleasant riding qualities because of its lightness and well-ballasted track.

Westferry is the station illustrated. The rounded glass canopy is characteristic of the DLR and covers less than a third of the nine-metre platform. The station was photographed in January when unfinished, but its rather spartan appearance is nevertheless typical of the DLR. It is hoped to improve the facilities as time goes on.

The system is however a highly significant advance in light rail development. Small though it is, an eastward extension to Beckton and Barking is hoped for, and perhaps also a southwards one across the river to Woolwich and Thamesmead thus evolving into a wider network.

Tyne & Wear Metro has proved to be highly successful as a testing ground. DLR is likely to be even more so. Light rail will be off to a good start in the heart of the Capital, and must surely be the precursor of many similar projects throughout the country.

Jack Ellis

# PLATFORM

## CBI and Rail

Sir,  
It's good to learn that the CBI reads Railwatch (Letter from H.Benn, April 1987 issue).

I think, however, that their contribution underlines my point in expressing alarm about the Confederation's lukewarm support for rail development. I am sure that most of your readers would agree that this was a pretty feeble list submitted of potential projects.

I am willing to let people who read the CBI report make up their own minds about its overall balance. Meanwhile, perhaps, they could themselves suggest local projects that the CBI could add to their list. Suggestions should be sent to Mr Benn of the CBI Transport Department at Centre Point, London WC1.

Don Mathew,  
Transport Campaigner,  
Friends of the Earth Ltd.

## Short Cut to Eastleigh Electrification?

Dear Mr Willson,  
I am puzzled by the apparent reluctance on the part of the Department of Transport to show support for British Rail in its desire to electrify the lines between Portsmouth and Eastleigh/Southampton, particularly as it seems that Hampshire County Council has agreed to support the scheme financially.

I have suggested to the Southern an alternative scheme, that must be very much cheaper, and I would be interested to know about any inherent shortcomings. The apparent benefits would seem, in the absence of better knowledge, to outweigh possible shortcomings.

If it is possible to complete a triangle at Eastleigh, by using land between the Traction Maintenance Depot and the airport, a direct line from Fareham to St Denys could be created that would be only 0.9 mile longer than the existing line via Netly. The present line from Fareham to Eastleigh is straight and fast, in contrast to that via Netly which is tortuous, difficult and very slow. The gain in time between Portsmouth and Southampton via the Eastleigh triangle would be worthwhile.

Access to the upgraded Parkway station at Southampton Airport is a further point in favour. The layouts at Fareham and St Denys would allow the Netly line to be converted to a regular shuttle, for which electrification could acceptably be delayed. Dare I suggest a further economy in the line's singling? Thus all immediate finance could be devoted to electrifying the Fareham - Eastleigh

section, with the useful possibility of a completed triangle at Eastleigh. The need for Fareham to be given a long-overdue through service to London, with electrification, should not require any further argument.

Perhaps such a suggestion has already been considered? If so, then I am unaware of its discussion in print.

Bruce Oliver,  
Southsea,  
Hampshire.

## Lincoln - Sleaford

Sir,  
I feel the RDS, both nationally and in Lincolnshire, should consider and actively debate the future of the Doncaster, Lincoln, Sleaford to Peterborough line. This line lost a lot of its traditional importance, as a freight route, upon closure of the March - Spalding line in the early eighties. Soon, when the East Coast Main Line is electrified, it is very likely that the line's diversionary usefulness will be killed off (BR are unlikely to station diesel locos at either end to accommodate weekend diversions), so what role will the line play?

As a passenger railway the Doncaster - Sleaford and Peterborough - Spalding sections seem to do increasingly well, but Sleaford to Spalding is the weak link. There is still a night shift and the Sleaford avoiding line is still open, a very useful by-pass; and in spite of going through the closure process for passenger trains it still carries regular diverted ECML Inter-City and excursion trains.

Good signs are more passenger trains between Doncaster and Sleaford and the southern end, but the impending ECML electrification must cast shadows on this through route. More trains to Doncaster should prompt the feasibility of reopening Misterton and Finningly. Other suggestions are a station in the Nocton area, the Deepings area, Donington or even Helpringham.

The northern part continues to carry a lot of freight but, since the closure of March, through freight is less - much from the Eastern Counties going via Stamford and the main line. Will more freight go by the main line? What happens as the East Anglian ports grow up and we get a Channel Tunnel and, hopefully, BR's freight share increases? Remember the East Coast Main Line between Doncaster and Peterborough is mainly only double track and now almost exclusively a high speed passenger railway. Can it accommodate a lot of freight which would not be able to travel at such high speeds?

This freight, the reopened stations

suggested, and a better balanced service south of Sleaford could provide the line with a brighter future. Eventually the line from Ely to March and Peterborough must be electrified to provide for better usage of rolling stock and locos for freight haulage from Suffolk to the North, tying in with the main-line electrification. Could it dare be suggested that, in the long term, electrification of the "Joint Line" would seem sensible (single line with passing loops) to provide for freight and diversions.

Recently, the newspaper and mail from the Peterborough to Sleaford and Lincoln areas has been diverted via the main line. Is the night shift now to go? Worse still, the Summer Saturday Yarmouth train has gone. It was a stipulation of the March closure that one holiday train should remain (where have we seen promises like this broken before - nothing really changes, does it?). These are all steps to reduce the line's effectiveness.

BR are surveying the line's future now - RDS need to be involved now, before it's too late - especially concerning the Sleaford - Spalding section. There is much rumour due to lack of published plans. We could have a mini Settle and Carlisle and lose a very useful and underused line. Wake up RDS, and help save the "Joint Line".

P.B.Jowett,  
Leasington,  
Sleaford,  
Lincs.

## Singling in Cornwall

Sir,  
As a member of RDS and a supporter of rail transport I always keep my eyes open when travelling around.

Now, I also subscribe to several rail magazines - including BR's "Rail News" and I was recently delighted to read that several million pounds were to be spent in the Cornwall area on modernising the china clay industry's wagons and equipment in the St Blazey depot and sidings. The figure, as I remember it, was four million pounds. That is a lot of money and, as I was visiting an old friend in Par last month, I thought I would look at the situation.

The next station to Par is St Austell and, as our Penzance train departed, I felt it cross over on to the eastbound track. I thought "hello, we have single line working, are they relaying the track?"

Guess what - several miles of track is being singled on the main line between Truro and St Austell.

Further westwards I noticed that the same thing had also happened between Marazion and Penzance.

I don't remember reading about these

singling operations in any magazines and comment that this is bound to incur delays in the heavy summer holiday traffic.

H.N.Moore,  
Ipswich,  
Suffolk.

## High Wycombe

Sir,  
In view of the encouraging news in the current issue of Railwatch that there are 53 ideas for stations in Network SouthEast, I suggest that there is a case for a new halt to serve the eastern end of High Wycombe on the "Chiltern Line". In recent years there has been considerable housing development in the Loudwater district which should attract ample commuter support for a new halt.

Many years ago a halt was opened at Denham Golf Club, about a mile from Denham station, and this has now attracted new housing development with worthwhile additional commuter support.

I suggest that a similar halt serving the Loudwater area would be well justified.

John Baker,  
Seer Green, Bucks

## Letters to the Editor

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

## Labels

RDS now has on sale some attractive re-use envelope labels 10 x 14cm, showing a Sprinter and giving a few figures on road accidents, plus the slogan "Feel no pain - travel by train". These are available at 150p per 100, post free, from the Sales Officer, Geoff Kent, 21, Fleetwind Drive, East Hunsbury, Northampton, NN4 0ST.

## Ninth National Conference of Rail Users Groups

This is a major event in the RDS calendar, when delegates from all over Great Britain come together to hear and question leading figures in the railway field. This year's conference is on Saturday 19th September in University College, Bedford Way, London, from 11.00 to 16.30.

Further details from John Lark, 7 Gloucester Avenue, Gorleston, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk NR31 7LT (please enclose SAE)

# REGIONAL NOTES

## EAST ANGLIA

"Electric trains to Norwich, Cambridge, Peterborough ... Where next?" This is the slogan on a new four-page leaflet brought out by the Branch in May to mark the completion of the electrification schemes to these major centres in our region - schemes for which RDS fought hard for many years. Our leaflet then goes on to put the case for a further batch of schemes, as part of a national electrification programme.

Top of the list should be, in our view, the continuation northwards from Cambridge to Ely and King's Lynn, while other important extensions of the wires would be from Ely to Peterborough, and to Sudbury and Felixstowe. There would then also be a case for electrification across from Haughley Junction to Ely via Bury St Edmunds.

King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council has been particularly active in pressing for electrification, and RDS is working closely with this local authority. The Council has commissioned a feasibility study by Dr Nash of Leeds University.

In the run up to the General Election, the Branch made full use of its new leaflet, and also sought and publicised the views of all candidates on rail matters - an effort masterminded by John Lark. Meanwhile, Steve Wilkinson and Peter Wakefield brought out an updated report on the case for restoring passenger services from Cambridge to St Ives - a cause also being actively pursued by our member David Green, in his capacity as a County Councillor. Mr Green headed a successful bid by the Alliance and Labour groups on the Council for fresh feasibility studies on the re-opening of the March - Wisbech line to passengers - a topic on which General Secretary, Trevor Garrod, made a broadcast on BBC Radio Cambridgeshire on 26 May.

The new BR timetable in May saw the introduction of a late-night train on the East Suffolk line between Ipswich and Lowestoft - for which RDS and the East Suffolk Travellers' Association have been campaigning for three years, and increased services between Norwich and Yarmouth/Lowestoft. We are also relieved that the replacement for the "European" boat train from Harwich to Glasgow/Edinburgh - the "Rhineland" from Harwich to Manchester via Peterborough - remains a loco hauled train with refreshment facilities.

Trevor Garrod

## EAST MIDLANDS

The highlight of rail development in this area was the reopening on 13 April of passenger services to Corby - for which

RDS has campaigned for some five years. Congratulations to Branch Chairman Elisabeth Jordan and all the local RDS and Corbyrail members who fought so hard for this - not forgetting also former RDS Area Representative Brian Chaplin, who started the campaign and is now holding the RDS banner in South West Scotland.

The train service is a DMU shuttle taking 12 minutes for the 7+ mile trip between Kettering and Corby. Two dedicated single-unit trains carrying 65 passengers have proved to be insufficient for most workings, and a two-car set has had to be drafted in. The single platform at Corby - used by half a dozen RDS/Corbyrail excursions since 1983 - has been refurbished with lighting, signs, steps and a shelter, and there is car parking space next to it. Indeed an AA sign on the main road points to the station.

Usage of the new service has exceeded expectations, and on some crowded trains it has not been possible to collect all the fares. Elisabeth also reports that the Bedford Branch of ASLEF, whose members drive the trains, has been very supportive - indeed, jobs would probably have been lost had it not been for the new service.

In the February issue (of RW) our correspondent D.Taylor-Smith wrote about the problems affecting the area. This time the news is far more positive.

Almost all the news is good, BR adding an extra rush-hour train on the Midland Main Line, passengers carried up by 25%, Corby reopening and overwhelming success for South Wigston. The Branch also held a successful AGM where the pressures and need for development were discussed, resulting in additional members being elected with responsibility for the Roade/Daventry area and for freight.

The only worry is the imminent merger of BR's Leicestershire area with Derby/Notts. The new team will be based in Derby leaving only a passenger manager at Leicester. RDS locally is concerned about this.

At the time of going to Press, the Branch was working on a briefing and questionnaire for Parliamentary candidates and stepping up its electrification campaign.

The new South Wigston station, opened on the Leicester - Birmingham line, has proved to be more successful than even RDS predicted. Since opening in May 86, the station has been extensively used, so much so that BR have been embarrassed by the demand. The original 16 or so trains have now increased to 30 odd. More additions are likely and the station is expected to

make £80,000 for BR in a year.

Indeed local services to Hinckley, Naborough and South Wigston have doubled their capacity. BR have also produced an attractive local "Sprinter" leaflet which has been distributed door-to-door in the Naborough and South Wigston areas. At Christmas, BR ran special extra shopper trains, in conjunction with Leicester City Council and these too were very well used.

There is a strong moral in this story. Some 5 years ago, at a Public Inquiry, BR, together with the County and Borough Councils, said there was no need for a station. Thanks to a tiny group, the Inquiry Inspector disagreed and so was born the campaign to reopen South Wigston station. The work was demoralising at times, but the results speak for themselves and are a textbook case for others campaigning for re-openings.

### MELTON - KETTERING

Local RDS member, D Taylor-Smith, is at present working to persuade BR to run a passenger service between Melton, Oakham, Corby and Kettering, using the present diversionary and freight line. He would welcome offers of help and information/arguments to back up the case. His address is: 4, Linden Avenue, Countesthorpe, Leicester, LE8 3PG.

T.J.Garrod/D.Taylor-Smith

### GREATER MANCHESTER

The recent light rail demonstration at Debdale Park, Manchester, attracted a great deal of interest. And members of the public were able to sample one of the new vehicles destined for the London Docklands Light Railway. There was much favourable comment on the bright interior decor and smooth ride. The Greater Manchester PTA are now waiting to hear the outcome of their application to the D.Tp. for a Sec. 56 grant for half the cost of construction of the first stage of the proposed Greater Manchester LRT system, which will include conversion of the Bury line to 1500V dc overhead and the construction of the street section linking Manchester Victoria with Piccadilly and Central (Greater Manchester Exhibition Centre).

The new station at Salford Crescent, adjacent to Salford University, opened on 11 May. Initially it will be served only by local trains but it will become a major interchange with the opening of the Windsor Link in 1988/9.

Heysham Harbour is a welcome reopening with the new timetable. It will save passengers the tedious bus transfer between Lancaster and Heysham.

The Greater Manchester new stations programme has happily survived the abolition of the GMC and a new unmanned station opened in June at Atherton Hag Fold, between Atherton and Daisy Hill. Lostock Junction station, between

Bolton and Blackrod, will reopen in late summer 1987. Planning permission has now been granted for a station at Woodsmoor, between Davenport and Hazel Grove, and it will be built as soon as funds permit.

A further welcome improvement with the new timetable has been the reintroduction of Sunday services on both the Manchester - Glossop and Manchester - Wilmslow via Styal lines. The hourly services, which have been funded by Derbyshire County Council and the Countryside Commission respectively, will run until the end of September. The Glossop trains will be of great benefit to visitors to the Peak District and the Styal service will improve access to Quarry Bank Mill, a popular National Trust site.

Bus deregulation, which saw a 19% reduction in the bus mileage in Greater Manchester, has greatly boosted rail patronage in the county. There has been an increase of 20% on the Bury line, with an average of 11% on other services in North Manchester. Two rush-hour trains on the Bury line are now 6-car formations and the new station at Mills Hill is now used by 600 people a day. A new Passenger Operated Ticket Issuing Machine (POTIS) has been installed here in an attempt to solve the problem of queuing at Manchester Victoria.

Andrew Macfarlane

### LINCOLNSHIRE & HUMBERSIDE

In the new timetable there are many welcome changes in the Grantham - Lincoln - Skegness services. The summer Saturday trains all run up to 3 October and there are still eight extras as in 1986. There are slight alterations in starting points, some being further afield, and more pick up points have been included. A service from Newcastle was envisaged but has not materialized.

More of the extras are composed of DMUs, only three being loco hauled. The Sunday service is greatly increased and Skegness will continue to be served from Boston until 4 October. The Jolly Fisherman trains run from Whitsun holiday until early September, Monday - Friday instead of Monday - Thursdays only. There are more basic service trains on the lines plus one more to Skegness, making seven, and now four (previously three) south from Sleaford to Spalding and Peterborough.

Sadly the bad points are a complete breakdown in connections at Sleaford from Lincoln into Skegness/Boston trains during the middle part of the day, with waits of up to one and a half hours. The Heckington schoolchildren have lost their commuter train into Sleaford, presumably because the new diagrams preclude the provision of a train for them, and the contract may well go to the buses.

The summer SX train from Sheffield to Skegness is lost and with it the

chance of a reasonable day trip facility from Retford, Gainsborough and Lincoln to the coast at a time when money is being spent to promote the lines. The dated hauled Sunday Cambridge - Skegness still runs. A proviso of the March - Spalding closure was that a Saturday Yarmouth Holiday train should continue. Two years or so on and this has been lost. Promises! Promises!

The earliest Skegness folk can now arrive in Nottingham by train is 13.20 and they must return by the 16.31 from Nottingham. It is not all progress. No change in the 10-hour day shift as yet - this probably restricts the chances of any decent timetabling. The main line services for local journeys: Peterborough; Grantham; Newark; Retford etc., is just as bad. Try getting from Peterborough to Boston and Skegness round about teatime! It is to be hoped that electrification will rectify this.

Boston will now stable three units. Some very early and late passenger trains are now apparent plus some ECS trains solely to move trains around brought about owing to depot rationalisation.

Saturday 9 May saw Butlins open at Skegness but BR can't get it right and the midday service from Grantham was supplemented by a double-deck bus - a common 1986 occurrence. BR should by now know that people do travel to Skegness by train and two-coach "Sprinters" are of no use.

The Doncaster to Selby service has been drastically reduced to six poorly-placed DMUs. The Hull to Bridlington has been improved but Bridlington now has only one dated SO service left to and from Leicester. Withdrawal of through holiday trains for day trippers during the week rather hands it to the coach operators.

Paul Jowett

### MERSEYSIDE

A survey held in November 1986 showed that the city centre journeys on the Merseyrail Network were up 12% on 1985. Journeys total 650,000 per week, the highest since MPTE records began in 1969. City centre journeys represent about 70% of total journeys, therefore total patronage is near 1 million per week (Tyne & Wear Metro claim 1.1 million journeys a week). The highest increase is on the City Line, +45% resulting in overcrowding. On Wirral lines a drop of 10% was expected with the 40% fare increase in April last year. In fact, thanks in part to the continuing disorganisation of the competing deregulated bus services, it only dropped 3%. The New Brighton line almost held its own and the biggest mystery is a 10% drop in patronage on the West Kirby line. Northern line increased by 18% overall with Kirkby line showing the greatest increase of 31%.

A survey of the Hooton line patronage conducted in November 1986 showed that numbers had reached 126% of those recorded before electrification. The largest increase was at Bebington, with a five-fold increase to 3200 passengers per day. Patronage at Bromborough Rake, now 1200 passengers per day, is 45% higher than when planned. Birkenhead Central is now used by over 5200 passengers per day. Numbers should continue to increase. A new station at Eastham Rake, now badly needed, would add a further significant impetus to passenger numbers.

Electrification is on the boil once again with Cheshire County Council taking a more positive attitude than in the past. MPTE are conducting feasibility studies into the cost and justification for Hooton to Chester, Hooton to Ellesmere Port or Helsby and Hunts Cross to Widnes/Warrington. EEC grants are now 50% as against 30% when the Rock Ferry - Hooton Line was electrified. Costs appear relatively cheap compared with Motorway schemes eg Hooton - Chester would cost £4 million or Hooton - Ellesmere Port £2 million. These extensions of the Merseyrail electric network are vital and the Wirral Transport Users' Assn. (WTUA) would support any initiative for early completion.

### Port Sunlight Centenary

Lever Brothers and Port Sunlight Village are 100 years old next year. Various events will take place throughout the year from March to the end of the year and there will be semi-permanent attractions in the village. It promises to be a major attraction. One event will be a Rail Weekend with other forms of Vintage Public Transport as part of the event. There should be some form of adoption of Port Sunlight station as a gateway to the village. No one wants the village to become a gigantic car park. It is hoped that the major part of the Rail Weekend will be the operation of a passenger rail service on the Port Sunlight to Stork Margarine Works branch - a re-enactment of the first Lord Leverhulme's passenger service for employees that operated from 1914 to 1929. The possibility of steam-hauled trains is being looked into as this will have a bigger tourist appeal.

WTUA Chairman, Angus Tilston, is employed by Lever Bros, and suggested the Rail Weekend. The WTUA have therefore been asked to organise the event and market tickets. A lot of work will be involved and anyone who would like to volunteer to help at any time during the weekend will be most welcome, as will be suggestions for attractions during the event. Lever Brothers will pay all the costs of publicity, exhibits and trains. They will effectively sponsor the event, cover some of their costs by ticket sales, and leave the WTUA with some financial return for their efforts. Have you any

ideas? Merseyrail and local buses could do well out of the centenary year.

Angus Tilston

### NORTH WEST

On 25 March a delegation from the Settle-Carlisle Joint Action Committee, which included RDS member Richard Watts, met Public Transport Minister, David Mitchell. In an interview lasting 45 minutes the Minister was made aware of the urgency felt along the line for a quick decision on its future. Apart from this he was informed that the current growth in traffic was forecast to continue when the new service was launched on 11 May. This would make the line into one of the Provincial Sector's most successful. He was also informed that BR's financial case for closure was misleading as it was based on outdated data.

Since the meeting Cumbria County Council have made a presentation to the Minister who subsequently made a

quick trip on the line. Many believe that a decision is imminent but even with the calling of a General Election, none has so far been made. There are rumours that the Minister is looking for private firms to take over the line. On 2 May the SCJAC launched a briefing paper, written by Richard Watts on the "Dalesman" service. This looks at the introduction, current operation and future prospects of the receipts. Copies are available from Richard at 15, Stanley Avenue, Penwortham, Lancs. PR1 9RB on receipt of a large SAE.

The Ribbles Valley Rail Group, launched to campaign for the reintroduction of rail services on the Blackburn - Hellifield line were due to hold a Ribbles Valley Rail day on Saturday 11 July. A DMU chartered from BR would operate a service of three trains between Preston and Clitheroe.

The Ormskirk to Preston Travellers' Association held a successful public meeting in Southport on 8 April to launch their campaign for the restora-

## BOOKSHELF

### A CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

- a report by the London Regional Passengers' Committee, Golden Cross House, 8, Duncannon Street, London WC2N 4JF.

The committee which brought you "The Clandestine Railway" (See BOOKSHELF, RW 29) has now produced a second report which, like the first, is witty, clearly written and readable. The subject of this booklet is interchange between British Rail and Underground trains at certain stations in Greater London.

The report briefly states the historical reasons for the inconvenience of many interchanges (ie that railway companies competing with each other were not likely to encourage interchange) and cites BR research which shows that car owners tend to use their cars when faced with an interchange. It then defines the facilities desirable from the ideal interchange in terms of access, amenities, information and staffing and, finally provides "star ratings" for ten stations.

In general, the stations surveyed "reached a common level in terms of facilities". General cleanliness, timetable displays, and helpfulness by staff were encouraging, but signing and public address were less adequate in some cases. Waiting rooms and toilets often "presented a dismal picture", and it was uncertain whether heaters in waiting rooms would ever function.

After praising the convenience of cross-platform interchange at such places as Stratford and Barking, the authors awarded the "wooden spoon" prize to West Hampstead: "the layout of

the three stations is so poor that all but the desperate or the most determined would be deterred". Considering the station's future as a major interchange with the "Thameslink" services, this is an important problem to be tackled.

KW

### Railguides

Our four new Railguides are now out - see the enclosed leaflet. Still available are EAST ANGLIA BY RAIL, MIDLANDS BY RAIL, FIVE SHIRES BY RAIL, KENT & EAST SUSSEX BY RAIL, NORTH EAST BY RAIL and (last few copies) CHESHIRE & NORTH WALES BY RAIL. They cost 195p (Kent & East Sussex 220p) from Geoff Kent and, apart from making your rail journeys more interesting, they also make excellent presents.

The General Secretary is now discussing with Jarrolds the publication of a final set of new railguides in 1988, to complete the series, and would be pleased to hear from any member willing to help with these. The London & Home Counties Branch has already started work on a Railguide for Surrey and West Sussex.

### RDS Book on Reopenings

The Reopenings Committee is working on a new book, which it is hoped to publish in the autumn. It will contain details of all new and reopened stations and lines in the last two decades. It should be invaluable in helping to persuade councils and similar bodies to back further rail expansion. Any members willing to help - especially any member with suitable photos, should contact the Chairman, Alan Bevan, as soon as possible.

tion of the Burscough curves and the introduction of a direct Preston to Southport service. At the meeting a four page leaflet setting out the case for the restoration of the curves was launched. Copies are available from Richard Watts (address above) on receipt of a large SAE. Lancashire County Council hope to undertake a £15,000 study into the engineering costs of restoring the curves.

From 11 May the Manchester to Blackpool North service was dramatically improved. The service is once again half-hourly with "Sprinters" taking over from the old DMUs, and on some trains a buffet trolley is provided.

Developments on the South Fylde line have been welcomed by the South Fylde Line Users' Assn. The service is now hourly with a two-hourly Sunday service and many trains are linked to the East Lancashire Line providing through facilities from Colne and Burnley to St Annes and Blackpool South. A new station has been opened in Blackpool to serve the Pleasure Beach. Now SFLUA are looking for the provision of a passing loop on the line so that its capacity can be increased.

On 27 May the Branch was due to launch its latest user group - for the Manchester - Oldham - Rochdale line. Anyone interested in this group should contact Richard Watts (address above).

Richard Watts

## YORKSHIRE

Bus deregulation, a change of management on the PTAs and a substantial increase in the numbers travelling by rail have resulted in a complete change in attitude to rail travel in West and South Yorkshire.

The Huddersfield to Denby Dale line which has been under threat of closure for the past six years is to be given financial support by the West Yorkshire PTA starting in October. By singling the line from Denby Dale to Huddersfield and introducing passing loops and by replacing the DMUs with "Pacers" it is estimated that the level of financial support can be kept below £400,000 per annum. There is, however, an urgent need to improve the timetable if patronage is to increase; at present travellers in both directions arrive either much too early or too late for work.

The threat of closure to Woodlesford station is to be lifted by rerouting the Sheffield-Barnsley-Leeds trains via Castleford, so that they will be able to call at Woodlesford. Only the lightly used station at Altofts, near Normanton, is likely to close. New stations are to be opened at the rate of about three a year. East Garforth has already opened and Frizinghall is to open in the autumn. In South Yorkshire Rotherham Central has already opened and four other stations are planned. Mobile cleaning teams are

being set up to visit stations and remove graffiti whilst public address systems and television surveillance are planned for unmanned stations.

It is proposed to provide an hourly train service between Leeds and Sheffield via Wakefield and Rotherham to replace what has been described as the worst service in the country between any comparable pair of cities at that distance. Through trains are to be restored between Bradford and Ilkley and a half-hourly service is planned between Leeds and Skipton. It is further proposed that rail fares should be the same as bus fares for comparable journeys.

The abrupt dismissal of Mr James Towler from the position of Chairman of the North East TUCC at the end of March caused widespread indignation in Yorkshire. Whilst appointments to the Transport Users' Consultative Committee are for three year terms which may or may not be renewed, the manner in which Mr Towler's services were ended would seem more to be evidence of 'bad blood' between the TUCC and British Rail than of the need to bring in 'fresh blood' as claimed by the Department of Trade and Industry.

During the eight years Mr Towler was in office there were six public inquiries into rail closure proposals including two for the Sheffield - Huddersfield line and the mammoth Settle - Carlisle line inquiry. No area of the country was threatened with such savage cuts in the rail network as was West Yorkshire and the fact that there are any railways left at all is largely due to Mr Towler's resistance to British Rail's attempts to implement the Government's anti-rail policies.

Denis Bradbury

## LONDON & HOME COUNTIES

The dissolution of Parliament and the General Election has involved the canvassing of some 400 candidates on their views about railway matters. Pressure of this work and the consequent shortage of suitable meeting rooms forced postponement of the projected meeting with Chelsea Riverside Action Group about the Western Environmental Improvement Route (projected to run alongside the West London Line).

The Branch had its regular stand at Hoddesdon Model Railway Exhibition on 2 May which was financially successful. Sales of "Kent and East Sussex by Rail" are going very well, but there are still quite a few left and a start on our next book "Sussex and Surrey by Rail" has now been made.

Marred only by incidents at Barking and Willesden Junction, the annual branch outing on Saturday 30 May (early this year) was a huge success.

Starting at Victoria, the party of about a dozen (all travelling on One-Day Capitalcards) sampled the South London Line, although not operating as an entity from Victoria to London Bridge outside the Rush Hour.

From thence, the party travelled to Woolwich Arsenal, through the tunnel to North Woolwich (the ferry being on strike), visiting the North Woolwich Railway Museum, before proceeding to lunch at Barking.

After suitable repast, members travelled over one of London's "forgotten railways" from Barking to Gospel Oak

John Barfield

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