

Railwatch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

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90p

Karmageddon protest

August the first was K registration day - when the motor industry had high hopes that it would sell more new cars. It spent millions of pounds pushing its products on to the public.

Some campaigners were so horrified by the prospect of K-day adding even more cars to our overcrowded and dangerous roads that they tagged August 1 Karmageddon.

They were staggered by the news that in July alone the car industry spent £50m on TV advertising. That sum could have bought 50 new Sprinter trains.

After years of winning the argument over public transport but seeing a wrong-headed Government continue to spend vast sums of money on new roads, campaigners in London felt they had to take direct action.

Protesters on foot and bicycles paraded along Park Lane on August 1, banging old car hub caps to draw attention to themselves above the roar of the traffic. The protesters pulled an old car into Hyde Park where it was ritually smashed up. Then they listened to a reading of Heathcote Williams' poem Autogeddon.

Apart from demanding better public transport and more cycle lanes, the protesters said they were celebrating the drop in car sales.

They pointed out that over a third of homes in Britain do not have cars yet the Government spends billions on the roads programme and starves public transport of cash.

They highlighted the fact that roads now take up 25 per cent of London's space. And they reminded us that since the invention of the car, 17 million people have been killed on the roads.

The Government meanwhile has also played down the increasing danger of poisonous pollution from road traffic even when official records show that World Health Organisation limits are continually being broken.

One Tory MP, Emma Nicholson, said on BBC radio that her family's contribution to the environment had been to switch from a petrol to a diesel car!

A more sensible approach is adopted by Labour MP Keith Hill who uses not a car - but a Travelcard.

•The Park Lane protest was organised by a network calling itself Reclaim the Streets, which includes people from London Green Party, Earth First!, London Greenpeace, London Cycling Campaign, Alarm UK, No M11 Group, ARISE, and Lambeth Public Transport Group. They can be contacted at 435 Coldharbour Lane, Brixton SW9 8LN. Phone 071 738 6721 between 3pm and 6pm.



Real freedom: One of the protesters in Hyde Park at the Karmageddon march on 1 August

Investment crisis will cripple BR

A funding crisis of daunting proportions is looming for British Rail which could force the shelving of virtually all its improvement schemes - unless the Government breaks the habits of the past 30 years and takes action.

RDS has repeatedly warned that the preoccupation with privatisation was likely to be a distraction from the real issue facing the railways - underfunding.

Now the London Regional Passengers Committee also reports that the present method of financing BR is unacceptable and untenable. It also insists that the current level of funding is too low. The committee, which gave a similar warning to the Government last year, is dismayed by the lack of response.

It said: "The situation has deteriorated to such a degree that the word crisis is an understatement."

"It must be abundantly clear to users and observers alike that BR is living a hand-to-mouth existence with insufficient money to provide the quality of service that passengers are entitled to expect."

For the first time, the committee has received more complaints about BR than about all the other modes of transport it deals with added together.

So many stations are now "de-staffed" says the committee that it fears there will be a "spiral of decline" with fewer people travelling, more fraudulent travel, service levels reduced yet further to save money, thus making train travel less attractive.

The committee criticises the Government for not establishing a railway programme for London while happily approving spending on roads.

Committee chairman Dr Eric Midwinter said: "BR's customers deserve better."

•Transport secretary John MacGregor claimed in July that the Government will be prepared for the first time to provide BR with grants for track and infrastructure projects justified on a cost benefit basis.

Centres for attention

By Graham Collett and George Cooper

The travel centre lives on albeit with a different name. That is the verdict of several readers who wrote in following our article Goodbye travel centres in the April Railwatch.

The former travel centre at Winchester which closed down in 1990 has recently reopened as a travel information office and now deals with bus, coach and rail enquiries. It also provides a tourist information office.

The new office which will remain open for at least three years is being jointly funded by Hampshire County Council, Winchester City Council and surprisingly Network SouthEast. RDS member R J Holliday also points out that the travel centre at Guildford is still open.

At Basingstoke the travel centre closed down at short notice leading to strong protests to and via the local MP. It has since reopened as an enquiry office, shades of the 1960s and earlier. It also offers a limited international ticketing service.

The Reading travel centre has been converted to a European and Business Sales Centre with general enquiries handled only by two "information" windows at the main ticket office. While Southampton travel centre remains in business, Mr Holliday and other readers pointed out that both those in Portsmouth and Fleet have disappeared. We can

also add Salisbury, Chichester and Eastbourne to the casualty list.

Contrary to our report in our last issue, the Bromley South travel centre staggers on, despite an outward appearance of dereliction, emphasised by part of the space being used as a works storage area.

The secretary of the Transport Users Consultative Committee drew attention to the strong criticism which his committee voiced in both their 1989-90 and 1990-91 annual reports about NSE's policy of closing down travel centres. The committee feels this policy has been one of the more damaging actions taken by NSE.

The committee highlights the unwillingness of InterCity to support the travel centres on the south-west sector of NSE, despite the fact that they generate custom for cross-country services to Bournemouth and Poole.

The committee emphasises the point we made in our previous article, that BR will sell fewer tickets if people can't find out about services.

The committee says an unsatisfactory service is being provided to passengers where travel centres have been integrated into adjoining ticket offices.

It is good to know that the TUCs are backing the passengers on this issue, but if you experience problems in getting information or tickets, first contact your local BR manager.

TREVOR
GARROD'S
VIEW



A rocket for the executive

In the last Railwatch, a member's letter commented on the young executive who was amazed to discover that it took little more than four hours to travel between London and Edinburgh by train. There is indeed plenty of ignorance about BR services and facilities and it is one of our aims in RDS to combat this.

Some of this work can be done at a personal level. I am employed in an office of about 100 other people, some of whom approach me with questions about train services, or indeed about whether it is possible to get to a certain place by train. I keep a file of BR literature at work for such purposes and also maintain a small notice-board displaying timetables and other information. Every employed member could consider doing likewise.

I have also recently written two letters to local papers drawing attention to our improved service to Ipswich and London.

Then there are 70-plus local rail users' groups affiliated to RDS. Most see their role as spreading information about services as well as taking up complaints and lobbying for improvements.

The East Suffolk Travellers' Association, for example, has just published the 37th issue of its news sheet East Suffolk Travel which is widely regarded as the handiest digest of local train and bus information. A few days ago, I pushed 300 copies through letter boxes near my home.

The Yeovil & District Rail Action Group has published a very useful pamphlet on its local services, while the latest newsletter of the Mid-Cheshire Rail Users' Group contains a lot of information on how to travel cheaply by BR.

An RDS poster Support Your Local Trains is

available from our publicity officer (see back page) and can be freely adapted for local use.

RDS has also compiled the only comprehensive series of rail-based guidebooks covering all of Great Britain. These By Rail books aim to encourage leisure travel by train and are available in many outlets, but there is scope for more. If there is a bookshop or tourist attraction near you with no By Rail books on sale, let me have details.

Our East Anglian branch is currently scrutinising leaflets and posters produced by the tourist and leisure industry. If there is rail access to a museum, beauty spot or event venue, and they mention it, we shall voice our approval. If there is no mention, we shall write to the body concerned and suggest they put it in next time. Each RDS branch could undertake a similar project and appoint a member responsible for it. This autumn sees the launch of Britain's Railway, an audio-visual show by author and photographer Colin Garratt.

It promises to be an exciting and educative celebration of the versatility of our railway system and it is aimed at a general audience. I hope that many RDS branches and affiliated bodies will consider showing it in their areas.

It is also expected to be popular in schools and could be suitable for gatherings of young executives who think that Stephenson's Rocket is hauling trains to Edinburgh. For details, contact Colin Garratt, Milepost 92½, Newton Harcourt, Leicestershire LE8 0FH.

Trevor Garrod is general secretary of RDS and also writes a column every four weeks for the magazine Rail.

Mean and nasty decision

RDS has taken the initiative in protesting about British Rail's plans to rob disabled people of some of the benefits of being railcard users.

We are publishing a leaflet highlighting the injustice of further disadvantaging people who rely heavily on public transport to give them the chance to get around.

BR plans to cut the discount disabled people receive from 50% to 33%.

Two aspects of BR's policies come together in this mean little decision.

Other railcard users have already seen similar reductions as BR tries to maximise its revenue.

But it is also further evidence that BR is abandoning aspects of its activities which hardline capitalist members of the Government can perceive as a service.

Already petty-minded BR managers are excusing themselves from the effects of their decisions by saying that they are a business and they are there to make money.

Of course that is a nonsense. We all want BR to be as financially viable as possible but not if it means that services are emasculated.

Perhaps we should start asking the two-faced masters of transport policy in this country why British Roads is not making a profit and why enormous sums are being poured into providing more free roads at vast expense to the taxpayer.

Unfortunately penny-pinching is reserved only for the railways. This self-defeating attitude seems to be the driving force behind rail privatisation. Transport Secretary John MacGregor has refused to assure us that railcards will continue. It will be left up to the private operators. Unfortunately the record of private bus operators has been far from inspiring.

With the backing of the Royal National Institute for the Blind and the Spastics Society, we will be contacting MPs to ask them to put pressure on British Rail to change its mind.

It is depressing that such a decision could be made when the chairman of BR, Sir Bob Reid, is disabled himself.

Special offers

All-in prices (including post and packing) for these topical titles

Scotland by Rail £3

Who Should Run Our Railways? £1.75

Our Environment: A Bigger Role for Rail £4.30

Traffic Congestion: Is there a Way Out? £9.95

A free copy of Bustrition: Why Bus Can't Replace Train will be sent to everyone who orders before 31 October

And don't delay, order today, the new enlarged edition of A - Z of Rail Reopenings £5.70 (including post and packing)

Send orders or an SAE for a sales list to RDS sales officer, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN.



Rail champion: Helen Broadbent

In memory of Helen

By Donald MacPhee

The 30-year commitment of Helen Broadbent to better rail services was recognised at a ceremony on East Kilbride station in July.

A memorial seat, provided by RDS, was dedicated to the memory of Helen and her husband Jack in recognition of their role in saving the line from Glasgow to the new town.

Helen who lived at Clarkston was delighted when in 1989 the present regular half-hourly service was introduced.

Helen's relatives and representatives from ScotRail, local authorities and other public bodies paid tribute to Helen who died in 1990 and Jack who died several years previously.

In the wake of the Beeching report, they formed a local rail development association which became the longest-running organisation

of its kind in Britain. Helen was still serving enthusiastically on the national executive of RDS at the time of her death. One of her last projects was to organise the recording and taping of a song called the Railway Revival.

But she was also involved in many other causes, particularly ecology and the environment.

ScotRail director Cyril Bleasdale praised the vision of the Broadbents whose concept for the line was unfashionable in the 1960s when public support for railways was at its lowest. He hoped that Sunday services could be introduced on the line.

Strathclyde transport chief Malcolm Waugh recalled his many encounters with the determined couple and said he was now pressing for the extension of the line into East Kilbride town centre.

Criminals who undermine rail

By George Boyle

A record of road haulage industry excesses would be useful to the work of the RDS freight committee.

As an example, the road haulier who was tipped to take over limestone traffic from the Redmire branch in North Yorkshire to British Steel in Redcar has recently been given a nine-month jail sentence for tachograph frauds.

It would appear that he could not have undercut the rail-haul price if he had been operating legally.

We believe this is only the tip of a very big iceberg and I have been given the task of setting up a database of information on such matters which we can use in the future.

I am particularly interested in newspaper or magazine articles detailing illegal road operations and court appearances for offences such as speeding, tachograph cheating or overloading.

If any member sees such items in local or national newspapers, I would be very interested to receive them together with as much background information as is available.

I do not, at this stage, propose to extend this to road traffic accidents unless illegal activity is seen as the primary cause. If anyone has any such information, will they please send it to me at 200 Buxton Road, Furness Vale, Stockport SK12 7PX.

A Rail not Road group has been established in Wensleydale to fight plans to switch the limestone traffic to lorries. If the line lost its last remaining traffic, it would jeopardise plans by the Wensleydale Railway Association to reinstate passenger trains through Redmire and Hawes to Garsdale where it would connect again with the Settle - Carlisle.

Three haulage firms were fined £8000 for overloading lorries carrying sand for the building of the inner relief road at Gorleston, Norfolk. Trading standards officers found 939 instances of overloading in two months although only 20 sample charges were brought. All the lorries were weighed before their journeys so the drivers must have known their loads were illegal. Yarmouth magistrates were told. Their defending solicitor claimed: "Road safety was never compromised."

High hopes for computer

Network SouthEast is employing "advanced computer modelling techniques" which could help to solve some of the area's traffic congestion problems.

The significance of the computer is that it will be able to assess traffic flows on both road and rail. It should supply useful information in convincing the Government that taxpayers' money should be spent on rail improvements rather than building new roads.

Transport Secretary John MacGregor recently told businessmen that rail schemes might be judged on a cost benefit basis rather than the current approach which demands that each rail investment yields an eight per cent profit.

Roads of course are not expected to make a profit - and never could if their full costs were properly assessed. NSE's computer will ini-

tially be used for planning work on CrossRail, NSE's head of strategic planning Graham Hewett said: "For the first time, we and the Government will be able to look at the transport system in the round."

"With road traffic forecast to double over the next couple of decades, we urgently need to be able to look at viable rail-based alternatives."

With luck, the next candidate to benefit from the computer's attention will be Thameslink 2000, the cost-effective and much-needed scheme which has so far been snubbed by the Government.

It prefers to ravage the Green Belt around London with a 14-lane M25 motorway. The Department of Transport's propaganda talks of building "distributor roads" because they know no-one wants a motorway near them.

The ideal gift for a rail fan

You can present your friends or family with a gift of RDS membership.

They will get a year's subscription to RDS, which includes four issues of Railwatch. As a special bonus, they will also get a free copy of the RDS book Fighting for Rail which normally costs £1.80.

Fighting for Rail is not available for gift membership at concessionary rates.

Thanks to your support, RDS is able to campaign for better rail services in Britain. This is particularly urgent at the moment with the threat to the network from privatisation proposals and the growing awareness of the need for an environmentally sensible transport system.

My name.....

My address.....

RDS number if available.....

Please send a card and a free copy of Fighting for Rail to:.....

Address.....

Send this form with a cheque for £10 to Frank Hastlow, 49 Imham Road, Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B74 2TQ. For family rates see panel on back page. Cheques payable to RDS.

Please allow two weeks for delivery

Branching to a poorer system

It would be difficult not to take issue with E H Longland who disputes that branch and rural lines are loss-making (Railwatch 52).

A leaked Conservative Party memorandum showed that the Government wanted to close the sparsely trafficked East Suffolk line from Ipswich to Lowestoft and axe the Norwich to Sheringham line.

As for private enterprise keeping open Colchester - Haverhill - Cambridge, BR are doing a very good job of running down the parallel Colchester - Ipswich - Bury St Edmunds - Cambridge "service" by inserting 40 minute waits at each station.

Giving subsidies to a service industry like the eight per cent for Network SouthEast, not the 25 per cent normal on the continent, means we get a poorer, not a more efficient system.

Jeff Taylor, 9 Doryland Way, Rowhedge, Colchester CO5 7JA

Reversal of fortunes

First congratulations on the high standard of Railwatch. In issue 52, Mr Peter Argent comments on improvement of the Cardiff to Brighton service. For travellers going in the opposite direction, the reverse applies.

The morning Monday - Friday train now starts 45 minutes later and no longer calls at three stations between Worthing and Barnham. Its arrival time in Cardiff means waiting 51 minutes for a connection to stations further west. Surely the trains from Brighton and Portsmouth which currently stop at Cardiff should be extended to Swansea.

I cannot help thinking that BR is wrong in its policy over many car parks in less congested areas. Not long ago, it charged £1 (£1 coins not accepted) but this fee was advanced to £1.20 and more recently to £1.50. One result of this is that where much money has been spent on improving car parks, many commuters find parking space in adjoining streets, causing inconvenience and resentment.

The law of diminishing returns applies here. Reverting to a popular price of £1 (and accepting £1 coins) could well produce more income.

Hugh R Fowler, 12 Coastal Road, Angmering-on-Sea, Littlehampton, West Sussex BN16 1SJ

Carving up the countryside

The doubling-up of the A74 Carlisle - Glasgow road is becoming a big carve-up of the countryside, all in an unwarranted effort to extend the M6 from Carlisle to Glasgow which also affects the A25 road to Stranraer at Gretna Green.

I recently spent four nights at the Gretna Hall Hotel which backs on to the A74. This hotel has lost quite a lot of ground at the rear because of road works.

Challenging the figures of BR withdrawal case

I have asked British Rail for financial information about their proposal to withdraw passenger trains serving Tilbury Riverside station but it has said the information is not available.

I have thus produced estimates myself. The cost is probably £59,000, with £20,000 for the terminal, £31,000 for track and signalling and £5,000 for movement. I doubt if there would be any savings in rolling stock sets if the station closed.

Based on the BR census figures which give 37,400 passenger journeys per year using Tilbury Riverside, I would expect the total

Residents in rooms at the back are complaining about traffic noise which goes on all through the night.

The answer of course is to re-vamp Railfreight in this area. Ideally a big new freight depot should be built at Carlisle.

Back in the South, there is also the need for another freight depot at Watford (not Willesden) to offload freight for the London area which could make use of the M25.

There is a daily influx of juggernaut articulated lorries belonging to Eddie Stobart (Carlisle) into Southall, West London. They create severe congestion in Southall.

When will the Government realise that Railfreight is the answer to our congested motorways? The M40, now extended to the Midlands and connecting with the M6, is now becoming well-used by traffic which used to use the M1.

It is quicker at the moment, but for how long?

RDS should be campaigning against the construction of new motorways. We must boost Railfreight to reduce the number of heavy lorries on our roads.

Brian Druce, 141 Convent Way, Heston, Southall UB2 5UF

True cost of motoring

I would like to remind my fellow motorists of a few facts generally ignored by the British Road Federation.

A modern railway can transport more passengers than a road occupying 13 times more land than the railway. A high speed train is 42 times more fuel efficient than a private car.

Taking into account fuel, insurance, parking, maintenance and depreciation, the average car journey can cost around 20 pence per mile while an off-peak train journey can work out at 7 pence per mile. This is a very different picture compared to 30 years ago when cheap motoring wiped out much of the rail network.

No matter how much of the countryside is destroyed by new roads, we can never get away from the fact that the vast majority of car journeys start or finish in a town or city where the only way to build any more roads would be to demolish buildings.

Many of the cars which clog our roads are unused for 22 hours out of the day. But one car takes up 50 times more space than the person who drives it.

The best parts of town are where the car has been banned. You can breathe and relax and children can run. There will be many more traffic-free zones in the near future, particularly for villages which are currently ruined by cars and lorries.

Even if we continue to ignore the pollution from exhausts and the extravagant use of resources

revenue therefore to be £75,000, based on an average £2 per journey.

I therefore believe that Tilbury Riverside train services probably make a profit of around £16,000 a year.

BR has reduced the train service over the years so as to discourage people from using it. The Tilbury - Gravesend ferry is also excluded from the BR national timetable. Rather than running the service down, BR should improve it.

E H Longland, 20a Rous Road, Buckhurst Hill, Essex

and energy on cars, we cannot ignore the insuperable problem of sheer numbers.

Britain is at crisis point and the solution does not lie with roads, but with viable alternatives which include rail, the most environmentally compatible system of all for both passengers and freight.

Ian C Forsyth, 117 Rutland Road, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 4BN

European tax threat

The European Commission has recently proposed legislation under which public transport fares would be subject to Value Added Tax in all member states.

In this country, the application of VAT to already excessive rail fares, in a climate of privatisation-induced confusion, would propel the rail passenger on to the roads as sure as night follows day.

The proposal is one of many aimed at completing the single market created by the Single European Act of 1986 which all EC governments signed and all national governments ratified.

The effect of the VAT proposal would vary widely, however, between countries. Some already charge VAT on fares, some do not, but none would be left quite as exposed as the UK with its uniquely niggardly official support for rail.

The legislation, if successful, would take the form of a directive or regulation, neither of which requires the assent of national parliaments. It would be enacted in fact by unanimous agreement in the Council of Ministers meeting behind closed doors.

I believe RDS should call on the Secretary of State for Transport to oppose this measure, while RDS members simultaneously lobby UK Members of the European parliament which is empowered in certain circumstances to amend this type of proposal and to prolong its passage.

MEPs of other countries would therefore be made aware of how invidious the measure would be in Britain.

Does the RDS contain a committee which monitors EC transport policies and proposals?

Bill Collins, 8a Moorland Road, Mickleover, Derby DE3 5FX

Presentation success

I would like to congratulate Chris Amundson on his presentation to the RDS environment seminar at Leicester on June 20, the fruits of a great deal of hard work.

Since the seminar, I have read the report and I was disappointed to discover a couple of inferences that could be put to good use by less scrupulous reporters.

I also note with interest the comments in Railwatch 52 about road costs and revenue. The problem could be much worse than suggested in Mr Atkinson's letter.

The Environmental Transport Association produced a report in November 1991 entitled the Real Costs of Motoring which suggests that, after the costs of accidents, company cars and other social and environmental factors are taken into account, the general taxpayer is funding motoring to the tune of at least £5,960 million per year.

Robin Draper, 4 Wresham Avenue, Bentley, Walsall, West Midlands WS2 0DG

Editor's note: Chris Amundson has answered detailed points also made by Mr Draper and adds: It is the efficiency of the total public transport system which counts.

Too hasty

I would like to comment on the joint RDS/T2000/NCIT statement regretting the Government's choice of the Ove Arup scheme as the route of the Channel Tunnel High-Speed rail line. If one takes a closer look at the scheme, it does not seem to be all bad.

First, the statement that suggests that the line is ill-suited to commuter traffic is partially wrong at least. Yes, agreed, Kent commuters do need a better service into London but do take a look at where much of the City is moving to; the Docklands. Stratford has better connections to this area than Waterloo. A ten minute ride into the heart of the Docklands on the Docklands Light Railway would be much more agreeable than a 30 minute ride on the Jubilee line extension, assuming it is built. By the time the High-Speed rail line is built, the Docklands developments should be complete, give or take a recession or two.

Secondly, Sir Bob Reid's statement that "it will take people where they do not want to go" is misleading. Not want to go where? As I see it, Stratford and King's Cross are ideal, Stratford for East Anglia and King's Cross for the North-East and Scotland.

Of course the Waterloo terminal should be retained for passengers from the south-west, Wales, the north-west of England and Scotland, but have you tried reaching Waterloo from King's Cross, Liverpool Street or Fenchurch Street, especially when the Waterloo and City line isn't running? Not easy, is it, when you have a lot of luggage to carry?

As for the high-speed rail line carrying freight, recent noises in the press indicate that it will carry freight, with passing loops being provided at suitable intervals. Had the fact not been overlooked that Stratford already has extensive facilities for freight, including a container terminal?

One thing I am in agreement with is that the timescale for completion is excessive. I can confidently predict that existing routes to the Channel Tunnel will be saturated within five years of its opening.

Who should pay for the high-speed line? The Government should fund at least three-quarters or even the whole cost. After all, it has paid for the cost of extending the M20 motorway to the Tunnel, so it is in its own interests to fund it, for the benefit of the country as a whole.

Martin Thorne, Student Liaison Officer, Railway Development Society, Member of Transport 2000, Cambs & West Suffolk branch

In good company?

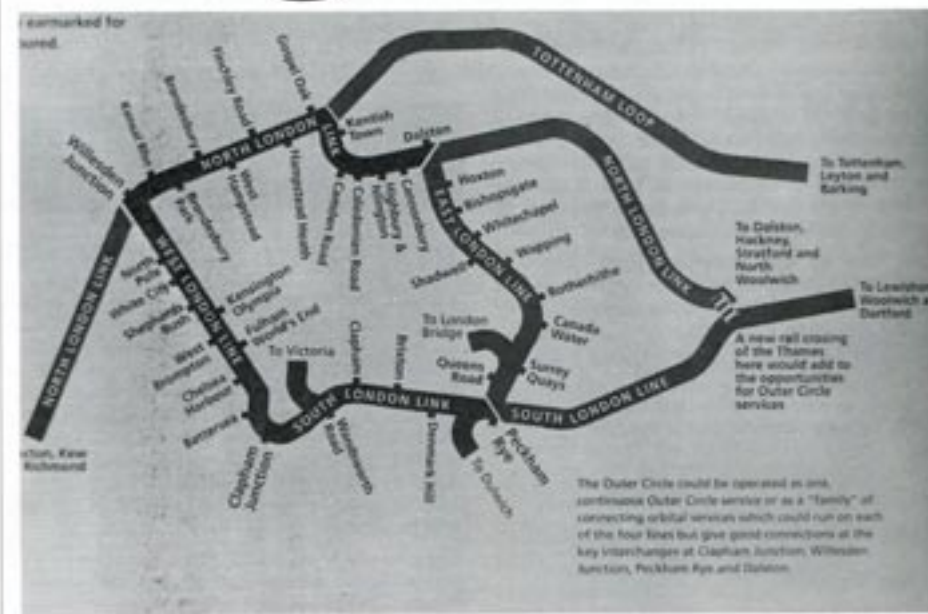
I'm afraid it's confession time. My daddy drives a company car. Daddy is a rep but, contrary to the views often expressed by RDS individuals, he is not a speed freak, does not break traffic laws, uses the car as little as possible, is very pro-rail and is a very good driver.

Incidentally if he did not have a company car, we would not be able to travel into Lincoln regularly to try to use the BR service. The buses run between 7am and 6pm, hardly giving scope for a good day out by train. When at home, my father will cycle around town.

Richard Watkinson, 3 Hazel Drive, Horncastle, Lincolnshire LN9 5BQ

Editor's note: Congratulations to your father for being a safe driver. But company cars in general are about 30% more likely to be involved in death or injury accidents than similar privately owned cars. They also receive massive tax subsidies from the Government. Horncastle did once have its own railway station.

Magic circle



One low-cost rail solution to London's massive traffic and pollution problems looks like getting the go-ahead - and could eventually lead to new orbital services for the capital.

London Transport has at last approved in principle the East London Line extension.

LT plans to ask permission from Transport Secretary John MacGregor to run trains from New Cross on the existing Tube line to Whitechapel and then on to a short section of new line in the Spitalfields area.

This would link with the existing (but unused) alignment of the North London Railway, allowing trains to proceed to Highbury and Islington - an interchange point for Network SouthEast's North London Line and the Victoria Tube line.

The new line would go through a London borough where in some areas only about 10% of households have access to a car and public transport is ramshackle.

No doubt the project will have to wait until the Government can wring some cash out of the developers of the Spitalfields area.

But it has great long-term potential. By using the new line, the North London line to Willesden, the West London line to Clapham Junction and the South London line to Peckham Rye, an outer circle could be created at very low cost. Amateur conjurer Mr MacGregor, as a member of the Magic Circle, should relish the thought of helping to create a circle which could work a little magic for London.

Let's hope Mr MacGregor can persuade the Government which has blocked a whole string of worthwhile rail schemes over the last few years to see the logic of this one at least.

In the same area, British Rail's dirty tricks department is doing its best to close down another very worthwhile link from Liverpool Street, via the new Dalston curve to Primrose Hill and Watford.

By cutting down the service to one train a day and then cancelling that without notice, NSE has driven most people away. Excuses that it does not have enough dual-voltage stock or that it wants to beef up the North London Line service are unconvincing. Yet now it wants Mr MacGregor to give permission to withdraw the trains altogether.

"BR's attitude to what are now the bare bones of

a service has been disgraceful and the few remaining loyal users have been treated with contempt," said the London Regional Passengers Committee.

If Mr MacGregor does give the go-ahead, it will be yet another alarm signal against doing deals with property companies. The property men got their Broadgate development but the public lost its trains. The warning from Canary Wharf is loud and clear.

Just a few years ago, BR was trying to close the North London Line. Only enthusiastic campaigners saved the line which is now doing well.

The West London line however is still neglected and campaigners from West London Roadwatch want to see it developed as part of an orbital rail service to prevent the need for more anti-social road building.

The group has just published an excellent booklet urging the development of rail routes outside London for freight so that more London lines can be used for better passenger services.

It gives figures showing how vastly more environment-friendly rail freight is. It also warns that there are already 6,000 lorries crossing Kent every day to get to Europe.

But it warns that if too many Channel Tunnel freight trains use the North and West London Lines they could squeeze out passenger trains.

Many new destinations could be linked by the West London line. The booklet gives one example. An NSE train could operate from Peterborough to Huntingdon, Bedford, Bletchley, Bicester, Oxford, Didcot, Reading, Wokingham, Guildford, Dorking, Reigate and Redhill to Gatwick airport.

●Avoiding the Bottleneck is published by West London Roadwatch, 87 Masborough Road, London W14.

Another outer-London ring rail scheme for the capital is also being suggested. London-based consulting engineers Tietz and Partners have drawn up a £760 million scheme closer to the alignment of the M25 motorway. Planners in South Buckinghamshire have questioned its value - because it would attract road traffic to stations.

The really devastating threat of course comes from plans to widen the M25.

New future for rural rail

By Trevor Garrod

Regional Railways has performed so well over the past five years that it bears comparison with any private sector organisation. It has certainly out-performed many privately owned bus companies, said author Paul Salvesson at a conference on Reviving Rural Railways.

It had boosted its annual passenger total from 180 million in 1986 to 198 million in 1991 while Government grants were being slashed from £561 million to £428 million. The presence of local authority representatives reflected the role which many enlightened councils have adopted in giving cash support and promotion to rural lines. The example of the Settle - Carlisle and branches in Devon and Cornwall were discussed.

There were no representatives from Dorset or North Yorkshire which both have reputations for being "parsimonious" with public transport.

Suggestions that Regional Railways could improve its performance still further by a drive to increase patronage were brushed aside by one Regional spokesman who argued that cutting costs is far more significant for the future of rural lines.

He suggested that business travellers drove by car to InterCity stations rather than use local trains.

RDS representative Chris Burton urged InterCity and Regional to "mesh together better" when planning timetables.

Local authority representatives all agreed that the integrity of the national rail network was vital.

It was encouraging to hear the representative from the Central Transport Consultative Committee eloquently advocating RDS policies on service levels.

The seminar, also attended by RDS national executive member Trevor Jones, was organised by the consultants Transnet to launch work on a £50,000 study.

RDS will be able to contribute only a token sum to the project but may well be able to give practical assistance.

If you would like a copy of the full notes of the seminar, please send £1 to Trevor Jones.

Many speakers at the seminar stressed the need to improve and promote rail access to the countryside and thereby reduce car usage.

The effect of one family's car outing into the countryside has been "costed" for the damage it does to the environment. For a typical journey from Manchester to the Peak District, the average car would spew out 944 grams of poisonous carbon monoxide, 105 grams of hydrocarbons and 230 grams of nitrous oxides.

Hydrocarbons and nitrous oxides combine in sunlight to produce ground level ozone leading to photochemical smogs and acid rain.

As a result, the family who goes out by car to enjoy the countryside is contributing to its destruction.

The acidification of lakes and streams and damage to woodlands is now a severe problem. Airborne pollution, much of it from road traffic, is the most likely cause.

The analysis was carried out for a new magazine called Countrygoer News which suggests that if you want to be kind to trees and birds, use the car less and make use of train and bus for trips to the country.

The magazine is packed with suggestions for days out in the country by public transport. You can subscribe to it for £6 a year. Send cheques to Countrygoer, Simon Holt Marketing Services, 60 Church Road, Gatley, Cheshire SK8 4NQ.

Also produced by the same publisher is the Countrygoer Travel Guide, which lists, county by county, where to obtain information about train and bus services and the various ranger and rover tickets available.

NEWSWATCH

RUG 92

Individual passengers and rail user groups have a chance to get together at the annual rail users conference. It will be held at 11am on Saturday 7 November at the St Bride's Institute, just off Fleet Street, London EC4. The major issue under discussion will be the effect of privatisation and the main speaker will be Lew Adams, assistant general secretary of the train drivers' union ASLEF. There will also be workshop sessions on how to improve our campaigning. Refreshments will be available.

The cost per person is £4.50 for members of RDS and affiliated groups and £5 for non-members. Please send bookings to John Bigney, 15 Plough Lane, Edenbridge, Kent TN8 6DU. Make cheques payable to RDS.

If you want more information about the conference, please send an SAE to Trevor Jones, 67 Guildford Park Avenue, Guildford, Surrey GU2 5NH. If have any special requests for topics to be discussed, please contact Trevor Jones.

The nearest stations to St Bride's are NSE's City Thameslink, Circle and District line Tube at Blackfriars or Central line Tube at St Pauls. Also walkable from Farringdon (Thameslink, Circle and Metropolitan).

Reopening boost

Thanks to all supporters who helped to raise £1500 in the national draw. Congratulations to the draw winners: Mrs A Ward, Nottingham £400, P Wakefield, Oakington, Cambs £200, P J Cox, Streatham, London £100, Dr and Mrs P G Holt, Preston, Lancs £50.

Other prizewinners were N Houldcroft, Cannock, F G Challis, Cambridge, N Jakeman, Rugby, E Holland, Stoke-on-Trent, M Redmond, Billericay, R C John, Port Talbot, M Hall, London SE15, G Willers, Sittingbourne.

Going Dutch

If you've ever wondered how to reach the Dutch Alps, our new book Beyond the Channel Tunnel by Rail will explain. The book will be published next year to mark the opening of the Channel. Deutsche Bundesbahn and other authorities in Germany have been helpful. Offers of help with the book, however modest, are welcome. Contact Trevor Garrod (address back page).

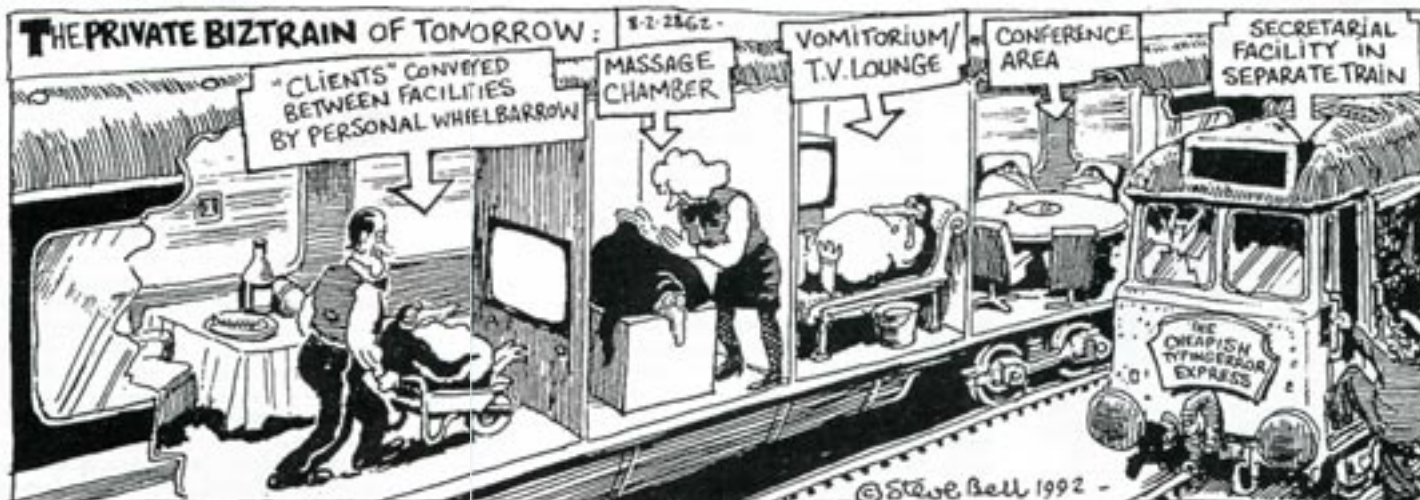
Silent champion

The Government minister responsible for the Citizen's Charter, William Waldegrave, has been notably silent after being asked by RDS general secretary Trevor Garrod to explain why all public transport users, not just rail passengers, are not entitled to compensation. Several members have been pursuing the issue, including Simon Norton and John Burn.

Ashford 93

The annual meeting of the Railway Development Society will be held at the Stour Centre, Ashford, Kent, on 1 May 1993 with Eurotunnel chairman Sir Alastair Morton as the guest speaker.

Steve Bell



Scotland

Bridging the credibility gap: One of the most scandalous documents ever produced by any government was the official "consultation" paper on a second Forth road bridge and other monumental road building schemes in the area. The Government's idea of consultation is to ask the road lobby what it wants and give it to them while saying to hell with railway passengers. The Government is so biased and ignorant that it dismisses the £1 million cost of an extra Sprinter train to relieve overcrowding on peak trains on the rail bridge but accepts the £400 million costs of a road bridge as well as the disturbance and inconvenience of the construction. Fortunately a number of bodies in addition to RDS has publicly condemned the paper and also submitted strongly-worded comments.

The branch was pleased to have a meeting with ScotRail and a fruitful discussion on matters of mutual concern took place. As an example of the new positive thinking in ScotRail, a series of weekend trains have been run to a temporary platform at Culross, following the demonstration train to Culross mentioned in the last issue of Railwatch. Instead of berating BR, the Government ought to be giving it credit for what it is achieving in the face of anti-rail Government policies.

Douglas Smart

North West

SEASIDE STRUGGLE: The branch is objecting to the proposed closure of Morecambe's Promenade station and its replacement by a new terminus 400 yards up the line. The old station buildings would be converted into a tourist information office and the narrow strip of land currently occupied by the railway would be used in a "regeneration scheme". Could it be that the BR Property Board has advanced from its culture-like stance over threatened lines awaiting closure, to instigating railway closures in order to carry out land deals.

We say the new station does not serve the town any better than the old one. With only two platforms, and those only capable of taking four-car trains, the new station would not be able to handle excursion traffic. A tourist office could be provided at the existing station to the benefit of rail passengers. The railway would enhance any "regeneration" of the promenade area, and help to reduce congestion while occupying a minimal amount of land. No doubt acres of car parking are currently part of the regeneration scheme.

JOINT LINE: RDS colleagues from Yorkshire and East Midlands joined us in July at the Transport Users Consultative Committee hearings into the proposed closures of Philips Park - Ashburys and Ashton - Denton. We are also grateful for support from Labour MPs Andrew Bennet and Tom Pendry.

GOING LIGHT: Manchester Metrolink system is now fully operational, officially opened by the Queen on July 17. The last remaining section linking Piccadilly station to both the Bury

and Altrincham lines opened on July 20. Concerns about through ticketing from BR and buses remain. Passengers buying tickets to Manchester from GMPTE stations and a few stations outside Greater Manchester will be allowed to use the system within the city zone. Anyone else will be expected to pay again. It also appears that pensioners from outside Greater Manchester are being made to pay full fare. A very unsatisfactory situation is expected to occur in October when GMPTE withdraws its support for the Chester - Northwich - Manchester service on Sundays. BR will terminate its trains at Altrincham and passengers for Manchester will be expected to transfer to Metrolink - and pay again. Someone buying a Northwich to Leeds ticket will be dumped at Altrincham by BR and will have to pay Metrolink to get into Manchester to board a Leeds-bound train.

Robert Cummings

London and Home Counties

Three signalling fires in June caused disruption to trains. A blaze at Romford on the 16th occurred during the evening peak and caused delays of an hour or more.

Another fire on the Great Eastern at Stratford on the 25th (the night of a bomb in the City of London) forced the suspension of services between Liverpool Street and Ilford. Buses were vastly overcrowded (with only one bus per cancelled train!). There were massive queues at Liverpool Street and buses took an hour to reach Ilford, compared to 12 minutes by train.

Police are investigating the fire at Kentish Town on the Midland which caused the worst problems. There was severe disruption to Thameslink and InterCity services from St Pancras to the Midlands. An emergency timetable was introduced on Thameslink and 125 mph high-speed trains were having to stop at red flags to pick up authority-to-travel notes from staff in temporary wooden huts installed at the trackside.

BR is having difficulty getting spare parts to replace the damaged equipment.

A number of points arise. The buses provided were inadequate to replace a train with eight or 12 coaches.

What is more worrying is that there appears to be no back-up facility when things go wrong with signalling. The Midland main line was signalled within the last decade but it is to be hoped that when life-expired signalling at Romford and Stratford is replaced within the next few years, some back-up facility will be built in.

It would be interesting to know whether there are back-up systems in France or Germany.

Howard Thomas

East Anglia

Access success: The story of how volunteers worked for over 20 years to build a railway centre at Chappel on the Marks Tey - Sudbury branch was told to the branch's summer meeting held in Colchester. The speaker was Mike Stansbury, chairman of the East Anglian Railway Museum, which was formerly the Stour Valley Preservation Society. Unlike some preservation centres, this one is easily accessible by train.

Bikers blocked: Restrictions on the carriage of bicycles by train have been introduced on Sprinter services. A maximum of two are now allowed on East Suffolk line trains. This is contrary to an assurance by BR manager Barrie Thomas a year ago that "at least two and as many as six" would be permitted. Local members have drawn attention to this in the local Press. These 156 Sprinters have less room for

bikes and other luggage than the 1950s-built diesel multiple units. But in normal conditions, they can easily take more than two machines. Thank you to members who have returned questionnaires to John Thompson with their observation on luggage and cycle carriage on cross-country 158 Sprinters. He hopes to draw conclusions from these in the autumn, so please return others (or write for a new one) to John Thompson at 136 Dell Road, Oulton Broad, Lowestoft NR33 9NT.

Chance to share: The track between Wymondham and Dereham is now officially owned by the Great Eastern Railway Co. (1989). To qualify for voting shares, you need to be a member of the Mid Norfolk Railway Society. For details send an SAE to Bill George, 18 Swanton Drive, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 4DW.

Electric clash: Railfreight Distribution has shown renewed interest in electrifying the Felixstowe branch and we in RDS are supporting their efforts, with committee member Charles Taylor being interviewed on Anglia TV for instance. The response from Regional Railways has been that it has recently invested in a diesel 153 Sprinter and would operate that under the wires to Felixstowe! It can't afford an electric multiple unit. This attitude does not exactly strengthen the hand of their colleagues on the freight side. It gives some weight to the RDS view that the Felixstowe branch, like those to Harwich, Sudbury, Clacton and Walton, might be better off as part of Network SouthEast. The branch has meanwhile suggested that an electric service could be run by extending the existing NSE service to Ipswich down the line to Felixstowe.

Trevor Garrod and Nick Dibben

Wessex

Walkover: Having waited over 20 years for a train from Shanklin to Ventnor, we decided that enough was enough. The branch committee walked the trackbed to see at first hand the problems which have to be overcome if the line is to be reinstated. Representatives from the local authority, business and the Isle of Wight Steam Railway joined us.

Dock link: British Rail has agreed to keep open the freight line to Poole Docks from Hamworthy Junction after appeals from the branch. The local shipping agent is being allowed to continue to use the line in the immediate future. This will save villages from the threatened stream of steel-carrying juggernauts which would have resulted if the line closed.

Recycle: The former line from Chichester to Midhurst has been converted into a cycleway and path. Local councils have been urged to retain the option of reinstating the rail link in the future.

Noisy neighbour: Environmental health officers from Salisbury District Council have ruled that the line serving the new 159 depot is too close to the nearest house and constitutes a noise hazard. The line may have to be moved a few yards away and the branch hopes this will not delay the £7 million project.

Home thoughts from abroad: I have recently returned from holiday in Switzerland where my family made extensive use of the excellent rail network. However, on one occasion, the guide apologised for the very expensive fare which was due to "having to use one of Switzerland's private railways".

Peter Argent

East Midlands

The possibility of services from the Midland Main Line, via the Settle and Carlisle, to Glasgow were under investigation at a seminar in Leicester in September.

Rail - it's miles better

A new booklet by RDS member Chris Amundson has been published to highlight the advantages of rail in coping with our environmental problems. It was launched at a seminar in Leicester in June by Chris who is a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Chartered Institute of Transport.

Mei Read, Leicester's Labour Member of the European Parliament said many of her constituents complained about road building and many were now linking their arguments with a demand for better rail facilities.

The seminar heard that it was possible to reduce our dependence on polluting forms of road transport. In Zurich city centre for instance, private transport now took only a 20% share of the market. Public transport with a good quality of service accounted for 80%.

In Britain, short-sighted planning has allowed private transport to account for an average 60%.

There have been successful attempts to shift people back to better public transport, notably by the Greater London Council. But the then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's reaction was to abolish the council.

Now new cheap stock, de-staffed stations and service cuts were frightening people away from rail. 80% of people believe public transport should be improved.

Just a few facts from the booklet: rail accounts for 3.5% of carbon dioxide emitted by transport in Britain. Cars alone account for 59.2%.

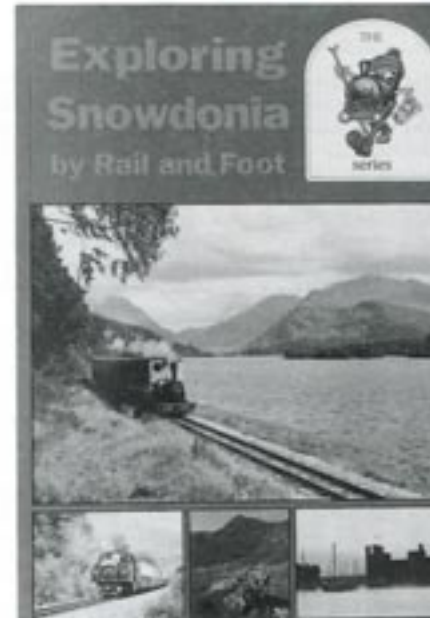
Railways emit 1% of the overall nitrogen dioxide emissions in Britain. Road transport accounts for 48%. Rail emits a negligible amount of carbon monoxide. Road transport accounts for 88%.

Rail emits a negligible amount of volatile organic compounds. Road accounts for 37% of the total. Millions of people do not use cars. 35% of households have no access to a car and have to rely on public transport.

A double track high-speed railway uses half the land need for a dual two-lane motorway but provides twice the capacity. It is equal to a dual five-lane motorway.

The 50-page booklet *Our Environment - A Bigger Role for Rail* is packed with information. It costs £5.65 post free from RDS sales officer, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN. Cheques payable to RDS.

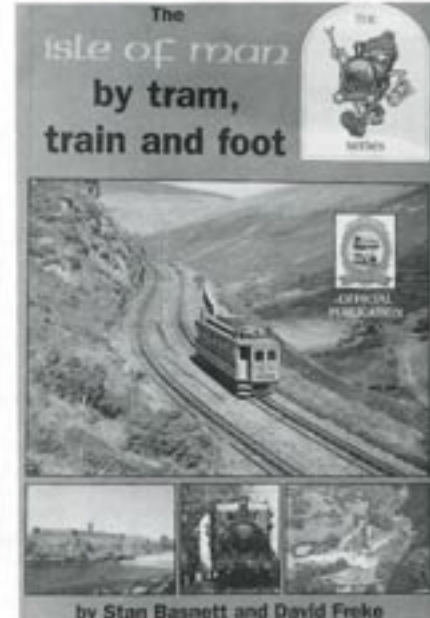
OUR ENVIRONMENT: A BIGGER ROLE FOR RAIL



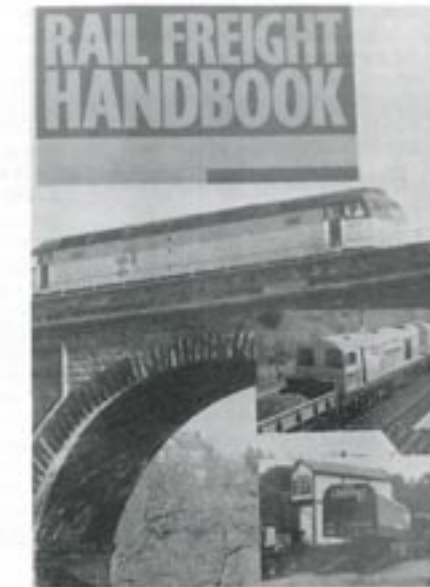
This is the latest of publisher Leading Edge's excellent RailTrail books. It was published in August. Author Guy Williams has produced a guide for anyone who enjoys walking and sightseeing but does not want the constraint of having to return to a car. *Exploring Snowdonia by Rail and Foot* costs £5.99. It suggests walks which can be enjoyed while visiting the North Wales line and Cambrian Coast line, as well as the interesting narrow gauge lines.



Another of the RailTrail guides covers the North East where the Metro is now 12 years old but still at the centre of transport developments. The whole area is a fascinating one for anyone interested in the history of the railways. The authors of this book, which costs £5.95, are Vernon Abbott and Roy Chapman. Railway history, art and wildlife are described together with town and country walks. It's an attractive book covering a fascinating area.



Next year is the centenary of the Manx Electric railway and this book will be the ideal companion for rail fans who visit the Isle of Man. Author Stan Basnett was born and bred on the island and was once its surveyor general. The £5.99 Leading Edge RailTrail guide also describes one walk which encompasses the whole island but can be completed in stages. There are also descriptions of Manx history and the island's industrial and railway heritage.



The Railfreight Handbook describes RDS as a "gallant band of men and women dedicated to the promotion and development of Britain's railways". The handbook, published by Clarke and Co, 26 Squitchey Lane, Oxford OX2 7LD, is also an excellent reference book. It costs £15 but special rates are available for RDS members. Contact chairman Steve Wilkinson, 52 Manor Park, Histon, Cambridge CB4 4JT.

Envelope re-use labels

RDS envelope re-use labels are available with the slogan: For Cleaner Air, Go by Rail.

£1.80 per 100 post free from RDS Sales, 139 Harrowdene Gardens, Teddington, Middx TW11 0DN. Cheques payable to Railway Development Society.

WESTMINSTER

Bigger Thameslink

While London has 13 BR terminal stations, only one route — Thameslink — crosses the centre of London. Viscount Whitelaw (Conservative) said on 1 JUNE that the King's Cross Railways Bill would do much to improve the present state of affairs. Moving the second reading of the Bill in the Lords, he said it would provide for the expansion of the very successful Thameslink service and create a variety of new cross-London routes. Thameslink trains would also be lengthened to a full 12 cars. Secondly, peak services which now use King's Cross could be diverted to the under-utilised facilities at St Pancras. "That must represent a renaissance for that once great station." Third, the Bill allowed for the integration of King's Cross and St Pancras stations with a single main concourse building. Fourthly, the siting of the concourse would facilitate the free flow of passengers to the Underground. All studies concluded that new capacity would be required for international services by the end of the century. Lord Whitelaw added that some might have heard of the Camley Street natural park, run by the London Wildlife Trust. Popular for many people, including school children, it would regrettably be closed, but the park would be relocated temporarily and later moved to a larger site.

Better and cheaper

Lord Rea (Labour) said he was anxious that all regions of the country have improved rail services from the benefits of the Channel Tunnel. For that to happen we needed not only better but more economical rail services. The decision was announced last year that the Channel Tunnel fast link would go to Stratford, though no plans of the route were yet available. One alternative was an overland route using the existing North London line.

One estimate of the cost of building a tunnel from Stratford to King's Cross at £500million a kilometre is £400million. That sum would have to be added to the cost of the exercise, making the cost of the Channel Tunnel link from Stratford to King's Cross £810million. Thus the last leg to King's Cross would represent almost 20 per cent of the total cost.

"I believe strongly that London will be improved by decentralisation. The decision to use Stratford as the main Channel Tunnel link was in keeping with that concept. It will help to take the pressure off an overheated area of London instead of increasing it."

Lord Sifton of Garston (Lab) asked if the Government's plans for the east Thames corridor were still the same. "When the Channel Tunnel Bill was first discussed, it was said that we should only need Waterloo station. What has happened since? It seems that we now need King's Cross, Stratford and the eastern corridor development to make sure that the line into Stratford is justified."

Baroness Hamwee (Liberal) said the opportunities of Stratford should be maximised, and the Government's reasoning in choosing an eastern approach route was one to be welcomed. Baroness David (Lab) said that King's Cross station and Underground were the rail areas she used constantly. BR and the Department of Transport had shown from their estimates that the low level station would double the number of rail passengers coming to the station in the morning peak hours. Impact on the people who live and work outside the station would be severe.

On BR's own admission, 83 residential units will be destroyed and more than 300 people will lose their homes, while 30 shops and other services for local people will have to close. Those who remain in the streets around would be living immediately on the brink of the biggest inner-city construction site in Europe.

Lord Henderson of Brompton (Independent) said that he now understood that the King's Cross terminal would take passenger traffic only from the Channel Tunnel. That diminished enormously the station's importance. Freight would now be taken from Stratford to the North. Freight was what really matters.

Lord Teviot (Con) said one of the key features of the King's Cross Railways Bill was the benefits to Network SouthEast's Thameslink operation. Thameslink reopened to passenger operation in 1988 after more than 30 years of closure and had experienced a renaissance. In the first year of operation there was a 300 per cent increase in cross-London rail journeys.

Ideal mechanism

"Taking advantage of the cross-London train service, there was an ideal mechanism for reducing the appalling congestion that plagues the M25 — a road that was overcrowded from the day it opened."

The Earl of Lindsay (Con) said that BR talked about King's Cross needing the qualities of a gateway station. "I agree. The concourse, its architecture and its facilities ought to be a source of pride to everyone using the station." King's Cross, King's Cross Thameslink and St Pancras were already used by 95,000 people in each of the two peak travel periods.

He welcomed the proposals contained in the Bill for King's Cross Thameslink. At present the two systems were connected by one of London's finest obstacle courses, suited only to those experienced, fit and travelling light. For many others, the distance, the steps, the busy roads, all contrived to make it an unlikely option.

"The radically improved integration between King's Cross and St Pancras mainline stations and Thameslink will therefore benefit those crossing London or travelling within London."

The integration that the King's Cross development would offer between Thameslink and northbound InterCity trains was important. Many people in the north could not understand the wider significance of an international station at Stratford. What made sense was for Stratford to become a valuable intermediate station to King's Cross.

"I believe that as environmental repercussions become more urgent, more intrusive and more costly, a shift in travel patterns

will cause the demand for rail travel to rise faster than is at present anticipated. We need an efficient, convenient and integrated rail system. It must have the quality to encourage demand and the capacity to meet it. The Bill is important in the strategic contribution that it will make."

Lord Tordoff (Lib) said that the London Channel Tunnel Group declared that the proposed terminal at King's Cross was far larger than necessary, given the international passenger station at Stratford.

How far was BR, in the development at King's Cross, taking into account what was happening at Stratford? Did BR take the Stratford terminal at all seriously? Had it been put on the back burner? A number of questions were still unanswered.

Lord Underhill (Lab) recalled that the Bill had been before Parliament since November 1988.

As it was a private Bill, he never took a party view on it. It was not until last October that the Government decided that the route to King's Cross should be the eastern one via Stratford. This was a very big job, because BR had been working on the southern route. People outside the House had said it was important that the King's Cross facility would mean a one-station only change.

Another point that had not been stressed enough was that the King's Cross project included a low-level station. That was necessary to provide extra platforms and longer trains. The second reading was carried by 30 votes, eight Labour members opposing.

Going to privatise?

Threats to withdraw the High Speed 125 Train service between King's Cross and Cleethorpes were the subject of an adjournment debate on 17 JUNE. This last motion of the day, introduced by the strange words "this House do now adjourn", is limited to 30 minutes if later than 10.30pm. On this occasion it ended just after midnight.

Michael Brown (Con, Brigg and Cleethorpes) said the 125 train service ran once a day in each direction and was the premier service to London from north Lincolnshire and south Humberside. It was introduced 10 years ago, replacing four direct diesel-hauled trains with dining cars a day.

The high-speed train was found to perform reasonably satisfactorily in the financial sense and served an area with

WATCH

potential future growth. But today the position had changed. "Never again will I treat anything I see on paper from BR as other than worthless."

Austin Mitchell (Lab, Great Grimsby) said as a supporter of BR and public transport he found it very hard to love BR or condone its behaviour. It made promises it had no intention of keeping. Most appalling of all, it had cut down cheap fares with the deliberate intention of keeping places empty, to fill up at Newark and beyond. It deprived the people of Grimsby and Cleethorpes of the service by increasing the fares so that it could fill the train later on.

"Does that not indicate that BR is prepared to fiddle the evidence so it can use the remaining 125 trains for other purposes elsewhere which are more convenient? Does that not indicate that it will do the same thing again?"

Mr Brown said that was absolutely right. Until last year, the casual traveller was encouraged, with promotions and advertising deals, to take advantage of the train. Now they were denied the opportunity, and BR had the cheek to advise four MPs representing Lincolnshire and south Humberside that it will suspend the service from next year because not enough people used the train between Newark and Cleethorpes.

BR was proposing the use of small regional connecting services between Newark and Cleethorpes. This would encourage more people to drive their cars to Newark or Doncaster. It was the beginning of a plan of attack, encouraging more and more people to travel via Doncaster to London.

Act of sabotage

Did Roger Freeman (Public Transport minister) agree that there was at least a case for local MPs saying to BR that as the Government intended to privatise in 18 months to two years, it should defer its decisions? "In the event that a private operator wants to take over the service, BR should still be in operation on vesting day. It would be an act of sabotage if BR ran down services."

Mr Freeman replied that BR had not proposed to close the line. "We are concentrating on the absence of a through service from Cleethorpes via Great Grimsby and Newark to London. The existence of a through service is often a crucial factor when business people decide how to travel to London. A connecting

service from Cleethorpes to Newark would not be acceptable to some passengers."

There was no way in which the Government could direct BR to continue a through service after May 1993. InterCity provided not a social but a commercial service. The Labour Party and the Government were at one in expecting InterCity at least to recover its revenue expenses. Use of InterCity services between Newark and Cleethorpes was very low and had fallen in recent years. There were now barely 100 passengers to be found on a train with a capacity of 480. Mr Freeman said that legislative policies, which he hoped would receive Royal Assent next year, would open access so that private operators were encouraged to run new services and franchise existing ones. Next year BR might decide to withdraw the Cleethorpes service: that commercial judgment would be its responsibility.

Many private sector operators wanted to change the quality of services and the timing of trains. There was a lot to play for. There was a prize for BR for improving profitability, but also an opportunity for the private sector in operating services on BR. "I cannot foresee whether that will mean that a private sector train will be able to provide through services if BR withdraws them. The Government intends to open up those opportunities."

Jubilee extension

Road routes into Docklands are insufficient, while the Docklands Light Railway has proved far too small for the task, said Simon Hughes (Lib, Southwark & Bermondsey), opening an adjournment debate on 18 MAY on the subject. "A Tube link is vital." News of a new line south of the river came as an enormous relief to those south of the Thames — an area that has been the white hole on the Underground map.

"My constituents and I now want the scheme to go ahead. It is committed so far that it must go forward. We look for a reply that makes it clear that the Jubilee Line extension will be built."

Steve Norris (Minister of Transport in London) said the Government had decided to support an extension of the Jubilee Line from Green Park to Stratford via Waterloo, London Bridge and Canary Wharf. The line would only be built, however, if sufficient contributions were forthcoming from property developers who would benefit.



The extension would cost about £1 billion at today's prices to which, over time, developers would contribute just over £400 million, which was of an unprecedented scale. The extension would have the capacity of around 15,000 passengers per peak hour in each direction. It would run for 10 miles from Green Park, 7½ miles underground and 2½ miles on the surface. At Waterloo the line would provide major new interchanges with the Bakerloo and Northern lines and with British Rail's main lines. Congestion would also be relieved on the Waterloo and City line and the Channel Tunnel line terminus.

Going back under the Thames to Canary Wharf, there is to be an interchange with the Docklands Light Railway. This was planned in the hope of assisting additional Docklands employment, although the extent of this development is now being questioned. Further extensions will bring further benefits. "I hope that the contribution that has always been anticipated to this development from the developer will be received in the near future."

Private operators

Government proposals for privatisation were given by John MacGregor (Transport Secretary) on 14 JULY, set out in a White Paper that day.

He said they were not proposing to sell all of BR; new opportunities could be achieved in other ways. First was franchising, enabling private companies to bid for the management and operation of services in return for grants. The Government intended that in due course all BR's existing services should be franchised to private operators. Secondly, freight and parcels services would be sold to the private sector. Third would be new rights of access to the rail network for private operators of both freight and passenger services.

Finally, a new structure for the railways would be divided into two separate parts: a track authority — Railtrack — and infrastructure. The Government would ensure that their proposals would not lead to any weakening of the high standards of railway safety.

John Prescott (Lab, Kingston-upon-Hull East) said that after 10 years of rhetoric, the White Paper

had 20 pages that were concerned more with presentation than substance.

"We can be thankful that there is no wholesale sell-off of BR, no regional break-up of the passenger services. But there is no recognition of how a modern railway system can meet the transport needs of an economy increasingly plagued with mounting congestion and environmental costs." The White Paper was no passenger's charter, judged even by the Government's limited standards. It was more a cherry-picker's charter, ripe for exploitation by property speculators.

Spawning Beeching

The White Paper took Britain in the opposite direction to that of our European partners, which in the last 10 years had invested millions of pounds in their railways, rolling stock and infrastructure.

Robert Adley (C, Christchurch) said the Transport Secretary enjoyed goodwill throughout the House. He hoped his intentions were justified and would produce a better railway service. There were 16,000 trains run daily by BR and most of the passengers needed them as an essential part of daily life.

A few sock shops on platforms and a few gaudy carriages were no substitute for an essential service. Perhaps the last and most significant statement made in this place by a Conservative minister was by Mr Marples... and it spawned Dr Beeching. Mr MacGregor said it was intended to proceed as quickly as possible with the freight and parcels businesses. He hoped that such arrangements would be made next year. "We shall be thinking in terms of franchises from about April 1994 onwards."

Peter Snape (Lab, West Bromwich E) asked if the Secretary accepted that proposals in the White Paper directly contradicted the recent reorganisation of BR conducted at a cost to public funds of at least £4,150 million?

Mr MacGregor said that BR was not alone in facing the fact that further changes take place in organisations after 10 years of reorganisation. There are additional benefits that come from these proposals. It will of course mean a further process of change for BR. "Change is a feature of life at present."

Cash-starved BR

By DAVID BIGG

British Rail's accounts were bad last year. But this time they are a real horror story. The network lost £144 million in 1991/2 - 14 times more than the previous year.

The figures would have been even worse had not grants from Government and other authorities increased by £306 million. These extra grants went some way to offset BR's £325 million increase in operating expenses.

Turnover rose in response to increases in fares and freight charges but by only £73 million. Obviously the recession has taken its toll but with the highest fares in Europe, British Rail has, to a certain extent, priced itself out of some markets. A run through the divisional results tells the story:

InterCity Turnover £896 million. Profit £2 million.

Network SouthEast £1044 million. Loss £181 million.*

Regional £312 million. Loss £585 million.*

Trainload Freight £505 million. Profit £67 million.

Railfreight £174 million. Loss £118 million.

Parcels £181 million. Loss £34 million.

BR Maintenance Turnover £278 million. Profit £8 million.

Transmark £9 million. Profit £1 million.

Telecommunications £10 million. Profit £2 million.

* signifies figures before Government grant.

The Property Board, which BR uses to bolster its finances, saw sales fall by £67 million to £53 million. With lettings producing £138 million, the Property Board produced a surplus of £110 million for the railway coffers.

But it's not all doom and gloom. Over £1 billion was invested, up 21 per cent on the previous year. But most of that money went on preparations for the opening of the Channel Tunnel next year.

BR chairman Sir Bob Reid has said that £1 billion needs to be invested in the railways every year for the next 10 years. We must hope that the money is forthcoming and that some at least will find its way into improving non-Tunnel services.

What do these financial results mean? There must be a real danger that more Sunday, off-peak and even rush-hour trains will be cut.



Happy face: BR staff are doing a good job of providing a service with often unsuitable equipment

Passengers will be looking to see if the Passenger's Charter is effective in preventing any further overcrowding. Early indications from my own county of Essex suggest that this could prove to be a vain hope.

The coming year (1992/3) is almost certain to be the last full year for state-owned BR as we know it. These figures will provide a yardstick to measure the performance of the private sector when it takes over some train services in 1993/4.

●How did RDS fare financially in 1991? I am pleased to report we had another good year to produce a surplus of £4,000 on a turnover of £31,000.

Income from subscriptions was boosted by two three-figure donations and the annual draw showed a profit of £1,300 while the monthly lottery raised £1,000.

How was this money spent?

Administration soaked up £5,500. Railwatch costs £5,500 to publish and publicity took

another £2,800. A further £32,800 went to the branches with £8,000 going to the Midland Mainline Campaign.

We also bought a telephone answering machine and a printer for our computer.

The current year is not likely to look so rosy, partly as a result of deliberate policy.

Having had two good years, I agreed to use all the annual lottery money profit for campaigns. We have also published A to Z of Rail Reopenings.

The branches will receive more cash this year and we have also had to fund lobbying for the general election and for the forthcoming privatisation legislation.

As things stand we are heading for a loss of about £1,000 this year. I will try to make us break even but I must warn you, it is tough at present.

It is also clear the national officers need more paid support. Reg Snow and John Bigny do sterling work but it is fairly obvious that the others cannot possibly carry the existing workload and, in most cases, pursue careers at the same time.

Two years ago, I said we were heading towards employing full-time staff. 1993 could well see a further step in that direction.

●David Bigg is treasurer of RDS and also chairman of the Witham and Braintree Rail Users' Association.

NEWSWATCH

Ride on

The Rail Defence Fund topped the £1,000 mark after the society's tenth annual sponsored cycle ride in May. Money was raised by Trevor Garrod, Clara Zilahi, Len Hodgkinson, Ray King's family, Robert Martinez and David Greeno. Other bodies to benefit were the Wealden Line Campaign, Imperial Cancer Research Fund, Save Oxleas Wood Campaign and Downham Market Otters.

Scandal service

There is only one train a week, in one direction only between Stockport and Stalybridge. There is only one train a day to Simfin, near Derby. Pilning station, eight miles from Bristol, has only one train a day each way. Smaller stations on the Oxford-Worcester line have only a couple of trains daily. Little Kimble, Bucks, has a peak-hours only service during the week and only one train in one direction on Saturday.

RDS officials James Towler and Alan Bevan are investigating reports that the Department of Transport wants to allow BR to suspend and then close any service without going through the 1962 Transport Act procedure.

Competition conference

Making rail competitive is one of the topics to be dealt with at a three-day conference in The Hague from 27 October. Details from Cargo Systems 081 330 3911.

ET92

The ET92 exhibition of railway equipment will be held in Basle from 24-26 November. Details from Judy Aspdon 0707 275 641. At the same time there is an Intertunnel 92 exhibition. Details from Ken Harris 081 847 2446.

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