

The Fenman

Newsletter of the Fen Line Users Association

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Issue 1/2008

The Fenman has been used, both officially and unofficially, as a train name ever since 1949.

FLUA is delighted that FCC unit no **365518** is now named **The Fenman** in memory of former Vice-Chairman, the late **David Forgan**. We are equally delighted that FCC unit **365527** - the one featured on our logo - is called **Robert Stripe, Passengers' Champion**.

“There are known unknowns...there are unknown unknowns.”

Derided at the time maybe, but **Donald Rumsfeld** knew what he was talking about! So when a reconnaissance probe on a mission to find costings for 125 mph electric Intercity 'IEP' trains on the King's Cross-King's Lynn route is spotted trying to slip under the radar, one of those unknown unknowns instantly becomes a big *known* unknown. All you can really say for sure in a case like this is that **the world has suddenly become a different place.**

Indeed it has - there's a sea change in governmental thinking. With climate change threatening a *literal* sea change - something of no little interest to Fen dwellers - environmentally-friendly rail is going to have to take more of the transport strain, worldwide

That means more growth, more passengers, more trains. Especially on a successful route like the Fen Line, old approaches won't do the job any more. A more expansionist methodology is called for. Hence moves like this call for high-speed 'IEP' train prices.

Ironically, the government has only recently okayed the Thameslink project - where does all this leave *that*? Is Thameslink to mutate into a shorter-distance metro-style scheme?

Remember we have an 'unknown.' The government wants to know if the price is right so it can decide where our route's future lies. And it needn't necessarily be 'either or.' **Looks like interesting times ahead.**

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'IEP'

The government has invited tenders for replacing ECML long distance trains, such as those that run King's Cross to Scotland.

'IEP' means *Intercity Express Programme*.

Some would be electric, some diesel and others a 'bi-mode' combination of both.

The first one of all those starts running in 2013.

At the same time, government is testing the costs of serving 11 'IEP' King's Cross-King's Lynn diagrams (daily work schedules).

A 5-car electric Fen Line 'IEP' would be long, equalling 6.5 class 365 coaches. 400 seats!

So, will they or won't they?

THE FEN LINE



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Each way bet

DEPART 0956 from King's Lynn and be in King's Cross at 1305. That was in 1908, a century ago; you went via Peterborough.

Twenty years ago it took two and a quarter hours, going to Liverpool Street. In 1992, by skipping the smaller stations, the new electrics brought the King's Cross trip down to 1 hour 44 minutes.

Leave Lynn at 0956 today and you're in King's Cross at 1135, five minutes quicker than in 1992 and serving all Fen Line stations, including the smaller ones.

It's speed that pulls in passengers. That's why 125 mph Intercity trains on the Fen Line have a certain attraction and the 'IEP' idea appeals.

But 'IEP' carriages will be too long to fit the Thameslink tunnels and would go to King's Cross - no 'IEP' to central London and Gatwick Airport.

An 'IEP'/Thameslink mixture seems a winner!

**Cambridge and north thereof
CAMRIGESHIRE County Council is asking for government funds for public transport improvements, to go hand in hand with their plans for congestion charging in the city. The plans include a new island platform at Cambridge - plus a completely new three-platform station, linked to the A14, at Chesterton. The intention is that all fast London services would call or start there.**

Sad times

OUR THOUGHTS are with the train driver, the police and other rail staff as well as with the families of the two young men killed while walking on the track at St. Germans, very early on Saturday 9 December.

FCC rallied round with buses – the non-stop Lynn-Downham service, complementing the necessarily slow 'back roads' bus via Watlington, merits praise.

And good times

SO KING'S LYNN LOST 5-0, so what? Next time, it'll be different! Our dismay on 15 December at the game against Cambridge United was greatly eased by the 8-car Football Special put on by FCC. Thank you!

And a good time was had by all the following Friday, 21 December, on the 0956 from King's Lynn, the Santa Special. The kids seemed to enjoy it as well. Good too to see Security Guards at Lynn on the 25th.

Chris Hayes has had to step down as Treasurer because of increasing business commitments. He has our best wishes. Thanks to former Chairman **John Legg** for stepping in.

Fenliner

Recent criticism of Network Rail, whether justified or not, seems to be doing the trick. We are getting suggestions that HS2, 3 and even 4 are being considered. Allied to the welcome news that more maintenance work is to be taken "in house" so that control and accountability cannot be sub-contracted, it seems that the sleeping giant has finally realised that it has the clout to take our railways forward.

It is now up to all of us who are involved or interested in any way to support them to ensure that the "political will" travels these exciting routes as well.

The good news continues with the announcement that we might get back to a 365 day railway again. This is, of course, a Leap Year, which has, yes, 366 days... no offence intended, Mr. Coucher, we are with you all the way – really!

Personal attacks, criminal damage and vandalism are never very far away and there have been several outbreaks on the line recently. Let us hope that the perpetrators are soon apprehended and punished.

Recent reports in the local papers suggest that those choosing to travel without tickets might now be regretting their decision as some fairly hefty fines have been dished out. Keep up the good work, FCC and 'one' and particularly the magistrates.

I heard that a popular early evening train from King's Cross to King's Lynn was cut back from 8 to 4 cars the other Saturday. Nothing too surprising about that perhaps, but... Arsenal were at home and the New Year Sales were in full swing. The resultant crush was literally painful to experience. Surely someone could have rustled up another unit from the sidings?

Finally, farewell 'one' and advance welcome to NXEA. Sounds like a facial cream but if the wrinkles disappear and the service is even better than it is now, we won't mind a bit!

Happy Travelling!

**Fenliner is on the Fen Line most days, and uses Downham Market station.
Fenliner would welcome members sending news and views.
fenliner@flua.org.uk**

The Fenman Interview

Ray Harding

Home station: Littleport

➤ *How often do you use the Fen Line?*

RH: Daily, Monday to Friday, for the past four years.

➤ *Where do you travel and why?*

RH: King's Lynn, I work there as Chief Executive of the Borough Council.

➤ *What's the service's worst aspect?*

RH: I am more than happy with the service, it invariably gets me to work and back home on time feeling relaxed and refreshed.

➤ *What's its best point?*

RH: I have the time to read papers and reports that I would never find the time to read in the office, without having to annoy my wife by reading them at home. I also greatly value the friendliness of my fellow passengers.

➤ *What's needed the most? Why?*

RH: A better and larger waiting facility on the King's Lynn side of the station at Littleport would be top of my wish list.

➤ *Anything else you'd like to say?*

RH: Personally, I greatly value the service to King's Lynn. Whilst I realise that there are rather more people travelling in the opposite direction to me each day, I hope that as King's Lynn continues to grow and prosper, ultimately we may see many more people heading north in the mornings. It would also be great if one day we could see two tracks on the entire length of the journey.

➤ *Finally, is FLUA worthwhile?*

RH: Absolutely!

Got something to say?

Think your opinions go unheard?

It's time you contacted **Andy Tyler** to volunteer for *The Fenman Interview!*

Littleport Lines

by Jenny Lowles

TORRENTIAL rain led to flooding of the pedestrian path from the road to the station, recently. In fact, it was not just the path but also the road leading to the car park.

Some of us attempted to climb up the bank to avoid both but this was very muddy and quite slippery. Others waded through the water on the 'crest' of the road as it was only a few inches deep there.

Most car drivers have been considerate and waited for us to 'wade' through to the main road, driving slowly so not as to create huge waves.

We have had this problem in previous years so this is not the first time, It would have been much more practical if some proper drainage had been installed when they resurfaced the road – or even when they created the path. The usual pool under the railway bridge has not appeared so perhaps it has found its way over to the path/road.

We did report the problem to one of the ticket inspectors but he could only sympathise and say that he'd let FCC know, though it's a Network Rail problem really. Thankfully, the water has now abated and debris on the path has been cleared.

Both ticket machines at Littleport have been out of action for some weeks now and I wondered if they would fix these before the gates were up and running at Cambridge. They haven't!

The first couple of days with the gates were confusing. Obviously, on Monday none of the passengers were prepared, but each day seems to be improving as the passengers know what to expect and the staff are trying different ways of moving passengers through as quickly as possible.

Bikes are a problem as they build up a queue and get in the way of non-cyclists trying to get to the barriers. Those without tickets standing near the gates do not help either. Still it's early days yet, so time should solve the problems.

And I like the new Cambridge travel centre, next door to the main entrance. It's quieter and you can speak properly to staff rather than shout through those grill speakers.

Gates at King's Cross suburban platforms are also now in use.

Parallel paths

A word of thanks to member **Bill Wakefield** for producing a comprehensive pack of info regarding the *Fen Rivers Way* path which parallels the Fen Line. FCC are to produce a brochure promoting the use of rail for leisure and recreation – **Bill** has quite literally shown the way!

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Power of leverage

A ha'porth of tar here, a ha'porth of tar there and, before you know it, you're talking real money!

The 0956 King's Lynn normally arrives King's Cross at 1135 – a 1 hr 39 mins journey.

It took 2 hr 8 mins back on Saturday 22 September – those *busway* works had a lot to answer for!

But, hold on a minute, on Saturday 6 October it took 2 hrs 37 minutes, an *hour* more than normal.

Surely the wrong sort of Saturday?

We know that line closures have to be done and we agree that the days on which we use the trains to get to work must be avoided at all costs. But....

Here's how it was done. On the 22 September the 0956 connected comfortably with a bus leaving Cambridge at 1052. But on 6 October the bus times had been changed subtly, so it left Lynn at 0934.

Result? 16 minute wait at Cambridge, followed by a connection into the fast train leaving Royston 30 minutes later than the previous trip.

Who on earth thought it was a good idea to have the Saturday trains leave Lynn 22 minutes *earlier* than usual?

**Not those turning up to face a 50 minute wait!
Time for a half-hourly service.**

King's Lynn CCTV is to be installed in the waiting room; there will be a new CIS screen near the 'taxi' exit to show arrivals and departures; planned are a cash and vending machines. The overspill car park is very busy, especially mid-week.

Watlington Another busy car park – it wouldn't cope without the overspill land. FCC and NCC are working on permanent car park plans – be quick!

Downham Market The cash machine has provoked a lively controversy! The extra ticket machine is a plus, as are new cycle hoops. We hope to see a footbridge by July and are pressing hard for the car park extension. We are also seeking clarification as to exactly when cheap parking tickets can be purchased.

Littleport Please mend the ticket machines!

Ely The new, non-railway, public car park is about 300m south of the station on Angel Drive. The subway has been steam cleaned and work on the ladies has now finished (the gents should be next).

Waterbeach Consortium RLW is bidding to build an "eco town" at Waterbeach airfield, including a brand new station, north of the existing one.

Nation's hub

FOR the next few years, King's Cross is set to become a huge building site as Network Rail redevelops the station to become a fitting partner to St. Pancras next door. Perhaps the most dramatic change will be the huge half dome on the western side which is to become the new concourse by 2011.

www.networkrail.co.uk/asp/4509.aspx

We have seen the future

AND if you're looking for FCC's magnificent St. Pancras International station (which has *completely* replaced King's Cross Thameslink), turn right outside King's Cross platforms 9-11, cross the road and go straight into St. Pancras International. Continue straight on and turn right just before the far side of the station. It's down the escalators – platforms A and B.

www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/Main.php?iCmsPageId=77

Fog lifting over Continent

THROUGH fares from King's Lynn and Ely to Brussels (flat rate for all Belgian stations) and Lille, Paris and other French towns are on sale, starting at £75 (Ely or Lynn to Lille and back). Phone (tickets by post) or book online (tickets must be collected from the 'FastTicket' machines at Ely or Lynn).

www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/Main.php?iCmsPageId=288

Membership enquiries to: FLUA Membership, Flat 4, 36 Nelson Street, KING'S LYNN, Norfolk, PE30 5DY or www.flua.org.uk/membership

Since we have introduced Corporate Membership, our scope now includes commercial and industrial companies, property developers, estate agents and many other bodies and organisations interested in the Fen Line.

Ten Years Ago

Barriers at Downham closed for 'inordinate' lengths of time; formal objection to housing on what is today's car park extension at Lynn station; piles of rubbish at Waterbeach; 1815 KX 'continually' missing Lynn connection at Cambridge - not a quiet start to 1998!

Somewhere in England

YES, we accept that things do go wrong, like the major signalling failure at Finsbury Park on Wednesday 16 January. But don't just give up on us!

Here's a sample: arrive King's Cross 1925 for 1945 to Lynn. Trains cancelled - milling crowds. 'Platform 9 - for Stevenage, Peterborough and Cambridge change at Alexandra Palace.' Crush load transfers to second train at Ally Pally. En route, driver announces train to be extended to Royston. Change again. 2149 'all stations to Cambridge.' Entering Cambridge, the driver – a hero - says 'please remain...this will be your next service to King's Lynn' [where it arrives at 2257].

But why was there not any information for travellers to Fen Line stations - until Cambridge?

FLUA diary 2008

Saturday 22 November

AGM, Watch out for details!