

The Fenman

Newsletter of the Fen Line Users Association

www.flua.org.uk

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Issue 2/2008

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**.

Unlike Hitler, who supposedly had no more territorial demands in Europe, we have a wish-list which continues to roll forward inexorably. Now we could (controversially, no doubt, and paradoxically) make a strong case that the King's Cross-Cambridge-Ely-King's Lynn service must be nigh on perfect. It is the best it has ever been. Passengers are demonstrably flocking to use it. Look at the full car parks, look at the full trains. Has life in the luggage rack **ever been so good?**

Capacity, capacity, there's nothing like capacity, as **T.S. Eliot** might have penned, but didn't. And capacity is what we haven't got – yet. So, can you stand the price of success, for *stand* you may well have to!

Let's be fair. FCC is doing its utmost to draft in trains from other operators to help out with the growing loads. There's a big shuffle round of trains involved and it's not something that can be done overnight.

In fact, such is the renaissance of rail travel, spare trains are few and far between. New trains are having to be built as well. That isn't something that can happen overnight, either.

Extra trains *are* coming, late this year. More are coming in 2009. Brand new *fleets* are coming in a few years' time, Thameslink and Intercity Express. But the daily reality of growth is now.

So, can the railway keep up? With new plans for Ely to grow by 10,000 and for King's Lynn to take another 10,000, 'inexorably' truly is the word!

In this issue

- Eschew obfuscation page 2
- The Fenman Interview page 3
- Back in Blighty page 4

Schemes both good and new

or What type of train?

*Comes a train for 'morrow maybe,
With a seat for all inside,
Intercity or a Thameslink,
Lynn to Cross, our Fen Line pride.*

Intercity 'IEP' – electric, 'commuter' 2+2 seating (First Class 2+1) 5-car sets, equivalent to 6.5 of today's carriages.
Top speed - at least 125 mph.
www.dft.gov.uk/pgrrail/pi/iep/

Thameslink – electric, 'commuter' 2+2 seating (some trains *may* have First Class), 4-car units with 100 mph capability.
www.dft.gov.uk/pgrrail/pi/thameslinkrollingstock/

*For they're going out to tender,
Market forces all set free,
And we wonder, how we wonder!
What on earth the word will be!*

THE FEN LINE



USERS ASSOCIATION

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Eschew obfuscation

THERE'S BEEN a torrent of reports and announcements since the last issue: Greater Anglia, ECML, and South London [eh?] *Route Utilisation Strategies*, the Rolling Stock Plan, and, of course, NR's Strategic Business Plan (as well as the high level Thameslink stock specification to set alongside last November's detailed IEP one).

That South London RUS gives great clarity into how the Thameslink network will have to be operated south of the Thames. Meanwhile, on our side of it the choice between IEP and Thameslink - or both - is wide open.

So where's the Fen Line going: King's Lynn to King's Cross *Intercity* or King's Lynn to Gatwick *Thameslink*? Big decisions with big outcomes are coming soon.

The DfT says, "the routes which will be included in the Thameslink service on completion of the Thameslink Programme [December 2015] will be included in the ITT [Invitation to Tender]." That's due in the Autumn, this year. Watch this space!

Life made simple

A summary of what seems likely:

Step 1 – progressively introduce 12-car King's Cross-Cambridge trains (attach/detach Fen Line portions at Cambridge).

New island platform at Cambridge.

King's Cross redevelopment.

Step 2 – run 12-car Liverpool Street -Cambridge high-density trains.

Step 3 – tackle many ECML bottlenecks, including a new flyover at Hitchin.

Step 4 – introduce 10- and 5-car IEP trains on ECML services.

Step 5 – start running through central London with new 12-car Thameslink trains.

Step 6 – widen Liverpool Street route south of Broxbourne.

Even simpler

TICKET types are to be simplified in a nationwide move. Excluding seasons, tickets will generally come in 'Anytime', 'Off-peak' and 'Advance' categories, with the likes of Railcard discounts, PlusBUS add-ons and Eurostar through tickets still continuing to be available.

www.nationalrail.co.uk/simplefares

Talk is free

BUT it goes a long way on those useful quarterly FCC webchats. Keep an eye on FCC's website for further dates, including a proposed chat solely on Thameslink Programme issues. www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk

Please note Andy Tyler's new email address is [fluasecretary \[at\] flua.org.uk](mailto:fluasecretary[at]flua.org.uk)

Fenliner

We seem to be awash with good and potentially good news just now: punctuality and train availability hitting new heights; additional trains on the way; new trains procurement process started; engineering projects given the green light; and, perhaps most welcome of all, a massive simplification of ticket types.

All this partly explains why "the railway" carried over 1.2 billion passengers last year. This beats a 61-year old record when the network was much bigger and cars were for the privileged few.

There is a bit of devil in the detail – 3 types of ticket is right for all of us from booking office clerk to passenger buying at the last minute. What is not really so good is the increasing use of time restrictions and increases in length of "peak" periods on both outward and return journeys.

I know all about demand and supply from 'A' Level economics many years ago, but isn't it funny how selectively economic theory is used these days when it has been largely ignored for most of the intervening years?

Why should workers suffer just because they are, by and large, a captive audience?

The railways are a public service after all. So why not have just one fare for a journey - well two, 1st and 2nd class - then let market forces really decide when we all want to travel? There is more than one way to run a revolution!

On a lighter note, it is funny how the ever-increasing use of ticket machines is leading to ever-growing demand to be able to buy even the simplest ticket from a booking office.

There is a place for both but isn't it so much nicer to be able to ASK for a ticket, rather than work out what you want before pressing buttons?

There is also the comfort of knowing that you are not alone. I think a few more generations must pass before the staff-less railway is fully accepted.

In the meantime, enjoy all the tremendous offers available via your local train service!

Happy travelling!

Fenliner is on the Fen Line most days and uses Downham Market station.

Fenliner would welcome members sending news and views.

[fenliner \[at\] flua.org.uk](mailto:fenliner[at]flua.org.uk)

The Fenman Interview

Rachel Arscott

Home station: Waterbeach

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

RA: Every weekday.

➤ *Where do you travel and why?*

RA: To and from King's Lynn, for work.

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

RA: Lack of clear information when trains are delayed – King's Lynn is particularly good at having both a real person and a recorded voice announcing contradictory information within about a minute of each other! Hourly-only trains can be frustrating as you have to adapt your routine to fit and this means longer at work than you would otherwise choose.

➤ *What's its best point?*

RA: On the whole, excellent punctuality/reliability – in seven years trains have been significantly late barely 15 times in total. No issues of overcrowding on this part of the route! And friendly ticket inspectors.

➤ *What's needed the most? Why?*

RA: In an ideal world, more trains, though I can accept that supply has to match demand and at 0629 there's not a great deal of demand going north. In general, I'm very happy with the service. Online booking of season tickets (flexible, so that they can fit school terms) has been a great boon since I started travelling from Waterbeach (unmanned) rather than Cambridge.

Truly a line for all seasons, the Fen Line is not only about the big flows of passengers southwards to Cambridge and London. Rachel's Interview follows that with daily Littleport-King's Lynn traveller Ray Harding in the last issue.

Truly too, no overcrowding going northwards - in the mornings!

Want **your** opinions to be heard by the railway companies? Contact **Andy Tyler** to volunteer for *The Fenman Interview!*

Change and change again

BEING JUST a 4-car train, the 1745 from King's Cross was pretty full on Saturday 5 April, **writes David Bell**. It reached Royston about 1820, where it came to an unscheduled halt.

The driver told us immediately what the problem was - a suspect package at Cambridge - and was good enough to let those who wanted to get off the train onto the platform to stretch their legs, something that was greatly appreciated.

After 20 minutes or so, the driver was then told that he had to take our train back to London. So everyone had to get off, go over a rather congested footbridge, and join an 8-car stopping train, which had pulled into platform 1. That had lots more room!

It took about another 20 minutes to get on the move again. Running late, we were stuck again, outside Cambridge, before the train terminated there.

The announcement at Cambridge was welcome – “a King's Lynn train is immediately following.”

Despite another slight delay at Littleport, where we had to wait for another train to leave the single line, we reached King's Lynn at about 2025.

Had I have known about this, I would have caught an earlier train, though I could, in fact, have left King's Cross an hour *later* than I did.

However, apart from people with heavy luggage having to struggle over a congested footbridge, it was, in my opinion, handled very well.

The drivers' instructions were very clear - moreover, they all kept us up to date!

FLUA website

We are continuing to add material to www.flua.org.uk which now has a special **Members' section**. This latter requires a Username and Password to enter, so, if you are a current member and haven't got these yet, please email – use '@' - [brian \[at\] flua.org.uk](mailto:brian[at]flua.org.uk) to request them. Remember too that even if you haven't got your own computer, you can access the internet at many public libraries.

Downham board crossing

JUST decanting the crowds onto the road would be irresponsible: a footbridge has benefits. But we say: what about Watlington-style lockable wicket gates?

Another day, another RUS

STILL AWAITED is yet another NR RUS document, this one being the “Network RUS.” It will cover a number of important issues, including those for “passenger services of over 90 miles in length which cross RUS boundary areas.” Cue King's Cross-King's Lynn!

<http://www.networkrail.co.uk/browseDirectory.aspx?dir=IRUS%20Documents\Route%20Utilisation%20Strategies\Network&pageid=2895&root=>

The Fenman Issue 2/2008

We are the champions!

When it comes to picking winners, FCC clearly have the right touch - laying on a football special for the Cambridge Utd v King's Lynn match last December was no mere flash in the pan! Now the Linnets are *Southern League Champions*, let's hope there'll be more specials to come. Lynn to Wembley, anyone?

Sweating the assets

WE'VE asked the train companies for the 2315 to Ely and the 0526 departure from Ely to be extended to/from King's Lynn (or connections would do). We're also pressing for an hourly frequency on Sunday mornings.

White hot revolution

New for station car parks – **Park and Pay by phone** - or by **text** - details on the FCC website: www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk
For Ely station car park, go to: www.nationalexpresseastanglia.com
And, of course, Watlington is free!

Good value

PlusBUS gives unlimited bus travel at either end – or both – of your train trip tickets, within the zones shown on www.plusbus.info, for very little extra. Buy them (on the day, or in advance) at stations, but **not** on the bus.

For example, 1-day, 7-day, Monthly, 3-monthly, and Yearly *PlusBUS* tickets can be bought for **Cambridge** (including Oakington, Fulbourn, Addenbrookes, Cambourne, etc) and **King's Lynn** (including Nth & Sth Wootton, Hospital, Terrington St C, etc). Railcard discounts apply!

King's Lynn The 3 new car park help points are solar powered. More CIS and CCTV are on the way.

10000 more people: King's Lynn Urban Renaissance Strategy.
www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=23706

Watlington FCC and NCC have plans for a proper car park. NCC's £85,000 has been matched by DfT funds which must be spent by end 2008/9FY.

Downham Market The cash machine is to be relocated before coming on stream. Sad that the station Post Office – but not the café, thank goodness – is up for closure. The car parks are full most days.

Littleport The car park (which has won a Park Mark award) is full most days. Platform CCTV - soon.

Ely The new Angel Drove car park (cheaper than the station one) has eased the parking problem.

10000 more people: A Masterplan for the City of Ely.
www.eastcambs.gov.uk/html/devpages.asp?servid=7&title=Public+Consultation&hier=Masterplan

Waterbeach Deutsch? Français? Even English! The new multi-lingual touch screen ticket machine *doesn't* swallow cards. Another is due soon. CCC and FCC are looking at another car park extension.

Cambridge Ashwell CB1 Ltd has revised its application to Cambridge City Council for outline permission [ref 08/0266/OUT] to redevelop parts of the area around the station, including a new interchange, station square and multi-storey car/cycle park.

Back in Blighty

by Douglas Bush

IS IT ME, or did FCC excel themselves with their 'customer information' poster giving details of their services over Easter?

It started off by announcing that there would be 'bustitution' between Royston and Ely on Easter Monday. The following paragraph then stated that an amended service would run on that Monday – it did – but there would be no engineering works.

Really? So the bus service was to save money then, I assume....

I can safely say that one of the enjoyable things about being abroad for the previous three weeks was not having to endure FCC!

Life moves on – I had the misfortune of travelling by train today. Only three consecutive cancellations from Ely to Norwich...

Anyway, this gave plenty of time at Ely to study the 'information' about the weekend's engineering work. There were plenty of notices saying that the line was closed at Shenfield. The monitors were full of the fact that Liverpool Street was closed.

Anything about buses running between Ely and Cambridge/Royston? No.

Still, at least 'one' rebranded itself. So that's alright then. If they carry on like this, they needn't have bothered, as National Express will be thought of just as badly as 'one.' Not that a name change fools many people. We shall see!

'one' was renamed 'National Express East Anglia' on 27 February, when newly reliveried no. 317506 worked the 1858 to King's Lynn.

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

The WAGN franchise was launched on 1 April 1998, in a blaze of publicity, and complete with a new livery. A new early Monday to Friday train for earlybirds was introduced only a few weeks later, the 0528 from Ely.

And, finally

WE HAVE a lot to say to the train companies. They're not perfect and, given the way the number of people using the trains continues to go up and up and up, probably never will be! But there has been a lot of change for the better and we are very pleased to acknowledge that FCC has become the first train company to achieve the tough ISO14001 environmental award. Well done, FCC!

FLUA diary 2008
Saturday 22 November
AGM – Green Quay, King's Lynn