

# The Fenman

Newsletter of the Fen Line Users Association

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## Issue 3/2008

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**.

**Nearly three million passenger journeys per year** are made on the Fen Line and the number is growing. A ten percent increase is shown in 2006-07 figures recently released by ORR. Star of the Fen Line show has just got to be **Littleport**, which has seen a hefty 19 percent growth over the last year. It may be one of the smaller stations – as you'd expect, the batting order is Ely, King's Lynn, Downham Market, Waterbeach, Littleport, with Watlington in last - **but Littleport claims another prize too.**

It has the biggest percentage of season ticket holders – 51% of journeys to and from Littleport are made by regulars. Now, in truth, the three staffed stations account for over 80% of journeys made, but it is good to see one of the smaller stations in the headlines!

**Before long, there will be firm news about the new trains the thriving Fen Line is to have in the future. The government is currently tendering for Thameslink and IEP trains and has already said that these types – either or both – are intended for our route.**

Not only new trains, but maybe new stations too. The much talked about Chesterton station – a kind of Cambridge North Parkway – is part of Cambridgeshire's long-term planning.

**That throws the spotlight on our busiest unstaffed station – Waterbeach. Any Chesterton stop would most likely change Waterbeach services. What sort of prize for Waterbeach?**

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### Waterbeach

**We want to draw up a profile of Waterbeach station users so as to respond to any proposals made if and when Chesterton got a go-ahead.**

If you are a Waterbeach station user, please would you respond to our short questionnaire?

Paper copies available from Andy Tyler (tel. 07803 459 043) or you can respond on-line at

**[www.flua.org.uk/waterbeach](http://www.flua.org.uk/waterbeach)**

**Please tell us about your latest journey from W'beach:**

**Which village or town do you live in?  
How did you get to Waterbeach station?  
Where did you travel to?  
What time train did you catch?  
How often do you make that particular journey?**

*All replies by Friday 5 September 2008 please.*

THE FEN LINE



USERS ASSOCIATION

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## Another place

CAMBRIDGESHIRE County Council has been promoting a new Chesterton Interchange station - at a strategic meeting place of rail, road and guided busway – for some years now. Although CCC transport plans are under review again, it has published a business case for Chesterton.

Located in the north of Cambridge about 1 mile south of the A14 and just north of the bridge over the River Cam, any station would be in walking distance of the Science Park and the Innovation Centre as well as probable new housing.

**If it got a go-ahead, Chesterton would have three platforms - two on the main line and one bay platform. Each one of these would be 300m long and capable of taking future 10-car IEP and/or 12-car Thameslink trains.**

There would be a main station building, booking office, passenger waiting facilities, toilets, CCTV, and information systems. There would also be a 400-space multi-story car park. A footbridge, with lifts and stairs, would link all platforms.

**In the morning peaks, all Fen Line King's Cross and Liverpool Street trains would call at Chesterton, plus Norwich-Cambridge services. There would also be a Liverpool Street peak service starting at Chesterton. Evening peak trains would also stop there.**

Off peak, there would be three trains per hour in each direction, 1 King's Lynn-King's Cross service, 1 Norwich-Cambridge, and 1 Chesterton-King's Cross 'semi-fast,' with equivalent services in the opposite direction.

Before settling on a transport review, CCC had previously applied for government funding towards an additional train each hour between Ely and Cambridge, calling at Chesterton.

And now Network Rail has published "*Investment in Stations*," setting out the myriad of planning, operational, financial, contractual and legislative considerations there are when expanding or relocating stations - and building new ones.

**Chesterton's already jumped through hoops...**

[www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/A8563030-DB62-4297-93AE-26508F876F3C/0/FinalChestertonbidMay2007.pdf](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/A8563030-DB62-4297-93AE-26508F876F3C/0/FinalChestertonbidMay2007.pdf)

## Bills and moan

INFLATION'S biting, job's irritating, the week's only half over. Time for the romance of rail...

It's difficult to stand properly on the 1845 without stepping on people sitting on the floor. The air is foul with the smell of overheating bodies and this is whilst the train is only just leaving King's Cross. Still, on 11 June at least, tempers are all fairly well under control.

Good, for another 21<sup>st</sup> Century night of passion is about to begin. Meanwhile, everything's hunky-dory, no doubt, in the fantasy land of value engineering, where only costs count.

**Fast forward three weeks to a tale of Paradise Lost. "They've even got a later train from Lynn to King's Cross" says one of a party of disappointed ladies from Lynn.**

It was going to be such a great day out, ending with an evening at the musical *Wicked*. Having met up, it's time to sort out the arrangements. Time too to discover that the last train back is still 2215 and the show doesn't end in time.

No In Town Tonight for them – and no refund for the theatre tickets either, judging by the conversations on the mobile. Of course they should have checked beforehand and not taken the 21st Century for granted, but are we ever going to have a late train to Lynn?

## Time is money

AS IT considers whether or not to buy Intercity Express Programme 'IEP' trains for our route, the government has published the monetary value of each minute of journey time saved on each of the top traffic flows in the proposed IEP network - east, west and Midlands.

One minute saved between Paddington and Reading (foreign parts) would improve that flow by £60.8 million. The second best overall deal across the network is a minute saved between King's Cross and Cambridge - £36.6M.

**King's Cross-Lynn at £2.8M and King's Cross-Ely at £2.2M per minute saved might seem small but each nets a greater value from that selfsame minute saved for, say, Paddington-Newbury or for Euston-Rugby!**  
[www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/rail/pi/iep/iepinvitationtotender/ittappendixc.pdf](http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/rail/pi/iep/iepinvitationtotender/ittappendixc.pdf)

## "Investing in Stations"

[www.networkrail.co.uk/browse%20documents/rus%20documents/route%20utilisation%20strategies/network/publications/investment%20in%20stations.pdf](http://www.networkrail.co.uk/browse%20documents/rus%20documents/route%20utilisation%20strategies/network/publications/investment%20in%20stations.pdf)

## **This rail business – an ongoing journey**

by Andy Tyler

NOT owning a car (my carbon footprint is low to begin with!) I need to and enjoy travelling by train and have always done so.

Although not a 'trainspotter,' during my years as FLUA Secretary I have learnt much about the railways. I have also met many interesting and friendly people, both in and on the periphery of the industry and my professional and personal life has been greatly enriched by them.

Having spent many years in the Thames Valley, I left a good line, the Chiltern Line, on which I used to commute to London daily. On moving to West Norfolk, I discovered the newly electrified Fen Line.

In my day, the Chiltern Line had a user group, and so before long on coming to Lynn I joined the already renowned Fen Line Users Association.

As time went on I began to work for FLUA and decided straightaway to spend less time on reading the *Gramophone* magazine and more on reading *Rail* and *Modern Railways!*

I partly jest as it is difficult to keep me away from my musical interests for long.

**My real point is that the rail industry is fascinating but complex, and to learn about it and keep up to date, one has to be fairly conscientious – but the rewards are great.**

There are many aspects to explore and savour: the business side, the rolling stock side, rail policy and the future, to name but a few!

I can think of many great moments but perhaps, so far, the visit to FCC's St. Pancras International station was a high point, not only for that impressive opening ceremony, but also seeing the main station in all its glory and meeting its chief architect, **Alastair Lansley**.

FLUA's 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday Party was another great occasion. The opportunity to meet those who have given their time and enthusiasm to the Association over the years was not to be missed.

We have also been blessed with train namings – *Robert Stripe*, *Passengers' Champion* comes to mind!

**The journey goes on, as does the pleasure, just as when I took my first train all those years ago. I can truly say that I am honoured to serve FLUA - and you, our members.**

*Fenliner is on holiday.*

## **The Fenman Interview**

### **Christine Smith**

**Home station: Watlington**

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

**CS:** Monday to Friday.

➤ *Where do you travel and why?*

**CS:** I travel into King's Cross and walk down to my office in High Holborn. I work for a firm of solicitors.

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

**CS:** Top of my gripes is the 1745 platform lottery. If you're lucky enough to travel on the 1645, you only need to stroll over to platform 9 and there will be your train. Why can't we have a regular platform for the 1745? If they could manage that one small thing, they wouldn't have to berate us each evening for gathering round the barrier!

➤ *What's its best point?*

**CS:** We all love to moan about the trains, but generally the service is reliable, the carriages clean and comfortable, and the staff are pleasant. Most of my colleagues' journeys are shorter but far less civilised. Overall, it's a great place to relax with a book.

➤ *What's needed the most? Why?*

**CS:** No question at all – CAPACITY. I'm fortunate in that I can be flexible in my hours so that I can usually get a seat, but I feel great sympathy for my fellow commuters arriving 20 minutes before departure and still having to endure a cramped journey in the gangway until Cambridge. However, I understand FCC are working on it.

➤ *Anything else you'd like to say?*

**CS:** Yes. A message to the Revenue Protection Inspectors. If someone is travelling with no ticket and no proper excuse, I know it's a whole heap of paperwork, but **please** issue a penalty fare. And a message for FCC – please cut down on your Inspectors' paperwork.

➤ *Finally, is FLUA worthwhile?*

**CS:** I've been travelling on the line for 10 years and I've *always* subscribed to FLUA. I trust that answers the question!

## The Fenman Issue 3/2008

### Over and over and over again

A FEW months ago, well-respected railway expert **Jonathan Tyler** visited us to explain the work he has been doing for ATOC in producing a *Taktfahrplan* for the ECML. This is a timetable which is based on trains/buses on differing routes meeting regularly at important interchanges - at the same number of minutes past each and every hour (or other timespan).

The system is used in Holland, Switzerland, and, regionally, in Germany. Travelling from A to C via B and from C to A via B always takes the same time and there is no need for anything more than a simple diagram to show all the train times. The *Taktfahrplan* idea has been proven to encourage rail travel - after all, it makes travel pretty easy for passengers.

**Jonathan's** work has now been published in the July 2008 issue of *Rail Professional*. King's Cross-King's Lynn fits neatly into the ECML pattern and, although he doesn't mention it, the scheme would also permit another fast train per hour to be extended to Lynn.

**The suggested ECML times effectively allow recovery margins at Cambridge on a 97 minutes up and a 94 minutes down Lynn-London timing.**

A downside is that the *Taktfahrplan* 'freezes' timings (at least for a period). We have much sympathy for the idea, but we would like to see faster journey times come in with our new trains in 2015 first. After then?

[www.railpro.co.uk/issues/pdfs/perfect\\_timing\\_tyler.pdf](http://www.railpro.co.uk/issues/pdfs/perfect_timing_tyler.pdf)

**King's Lynn** Off-peak Mon-Fri car park tickets are now valid from 0950 - we appreciate FCC's concession. Best to get advance tickets or use 'Park & Pay by phone' - arrive at 0950, buy car park and train tickets *and* catch the 0956 is pushing it! The beautifully repainted station looks very regal.

**Watlington** This station is to be repainted too, later on. Further DDA-compliant seats are to be positioned on platform 1.

**Downham Market** As always, the station and surroundings make a fine entry in the *Downham in Bloom* competition.

**Littleport** The car park is under great pressure!

**Ely** The line to Norwich - not our line - is to be a test bed for new 'modular' components when it is re-signalled in 2010/11.

**Waterbeach** CCC is to paint a yellow grid around the footpath entrance to try and stop unlawful parking - at least one wheelchair user has had to risk all and this kind of thing just isn't on! We are pressing for CCTV at this, our busiest unstaffed station.

**Cambridge** The gates seem to be working; we're still asking for 'train divides here' boards.

### The future's what we make it

"IN ADDITION, a wide area in the 50-100 mile radius from London would be served by new commuter services that would make use of the high speed line" says *Greengauge 21*, the company that's working with business and local authorities to identify potential routes for a national 200 mph rail network.

Network Rail is looking at potential new main lines too, including one to relieve the ECML. And, of course, right now the government is weighing up whether future Fen Line trains should be Thameslink or Intercity Express Programme ones (or both). Could high speed make a difference to their plans?

**Well, maybe. *Greengauge 21* has identified five route corridors, number 2 being very specifically labelled "London-Cambridge-North East."**

Today's King's Cross-Cambridge route is 58 miles long. Non-stop operation over a new line of, say, 60 miles might mean a run of just 25 minutes or so.

**North of Cambridge, the Fen Line is dead straight and dead flat. Few overbridges too, so no big problem with capacity-busting double-deckers. Come 2020, Lynn-London in 70 mins?**

[www.greengauge21.net/faqs.html](http://www.greengauge21.net/faqs.html)

[www.networkrailmediacentre.co.uk/Content/Detail.asp?ReleaseID=3765&NewsAreaID=2&SearchCategoryID=2](http://www.networkrailmediacentre.co.uk/Content/Detail.asp?ReleaseID=3765&NewsAreaID=2&SearchCategoryID=2)

### Ten Years Ago

We were pressing hard for the 2052 slow from King's Cross to King's Lynn to run instead as a *fast* 2115. Cambridge tourists were confusing the King's Cross portion of a dividing train with that for King's Lynn!

### Tomorrow, the world!

ALL this talk of 300m platforms begs some questions. The length is derived from *Interoperability Standards* - Europe's main lines are gradually being treated as a whole and although the Fen Line is only a 'Conventional Route,' it is in the *Trans European Network*. Chesterton would have 300 m platforms.

Would 300 m fit at Lynn? The answer is yes - the land there *would* allow further platform extensions. 300 m would take 10-car IEPs or 12-car Thameslinks!

### Destination: Tower

SO they lost. Exeter was one goal ahead of Cambridge Utd., but a miss is as good as a mile. Still a trip to Wembley is to be savoured. Thanks to FCC for putting on football specials from Lynn, Downham and Ely. Of course, United supporters knew what day the match was on, but why on earth did the FCC poster have two *different* dates on? Bit more than an own goal, that; may we jokingly suggest a different London destination for the perpetrators?

**FLUA diary 2008**

**Saturday 22 November**

AGM - Green Quay, South Quay, King's Lynn