

# The Fenman

Newsletter of the Fen Line Users Association

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

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

## Issue 4/2008

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**.

**Pile on - room for more on top!** Well, that's how they do it in India, but please don't try it here, with all those high voltage cables about! Funny though that you should mention India, what with that article in the *India Daily News* comparing *our* overcrowding to Mumbai's suburban network. When the 0715 Cambridge-King's Cross (that's the 0658 from Ely, which has a 0618 connection from King's Lynn) makes headlines in *India* you know that the Fen Line is really hitting the big time – **albeit for the wrong reasons.**

Five of the twenty most overcrowded trains in Britain are Fen Line services. But what *really* interested the world were allegations of government moves to reduce overcrowding by redefining the way it's measured.

Can you imagine it at King's Cross? "The 1984 to King's Lynn will today depart from platform 101. We are pleased to say there's plenty of room for everyone on the train, so no need to jostle and push. Thank you." Wouldn't that be something to be proud of, something *doubleplusgood*?

Ten years ago, we were calling for a 2315 train back to Lynn from London every night - we still are. But *now* the big issue is peak time travel, specifically overcrowding. That's why our loudest cry is for more and longer trains.

**We think two good improvements would be starting that 0658 Ely train earlier at Lynn, *plus* extending the 1815 King's Cross-Ely to Lynn in the evenings. Indian style, then? Oh no! Longer trains as well, please.**

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THE FEN LINE



USERS ASSOCIATION

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### Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting  
will be held on  
Saturday 22 November 2008  
at the Green Quay, King's Lynn at 2.30 p.m.

Our guest speaker will be  
**Guy Dangerfield**  
Passenger Link Manager  
Passenger Focus

As usual, we have invited rail management to  
attend and answer members' questions.

Andy Tyler, Secretary 31 October 2008

Leaf fall times – early morning trains  
[www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/Main.php?  
iCmsPageId=271](http://www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/Main.php?iCmsPageId=271)

### Contacting FLUA

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**John Legg, Treasurer**

**Robert Stripe, Vice-Chairman**

## One consideration with another

YOU'RE NOT a criminal if you're issued a Penalty Fare, though you might well feel like one. The crime that *does* lead to prosecution is that of deliberate fraud – fare dodging – and quite rightly too.

What if you want to pay but can't, in what you might call 'the case of the recalcitrant railway?' You know, when you can't get the ticket machine to work, when it won't take the payment you need to make, when you've been queuing for ages at the ticket office and, should you miss the train, you'll have another hour to wait.

A Penalty Fare is a civil debt. The normal burden of proof is reversed – the *passenger* has to prove that the railway was at fault. Because of that, the railway is controlled by the government as to what it can and cannot do.

The government's 'basic conditions' for agreeing a Penalty Fares scheme include many important points. "Passengers must be given sufficient opportunity to buy a ticket...we expect sufficient ticket windows, ticket machines and staff at staffed stations...we do not recommend that large numbers of unstaffed stations are included...a passenger should not be expected to buy a ticket at the interchange station if they do not have enough time to do so without missing their connection...."

We'll use discretion and not say where our most problematic stations are. But we will say we want to see fair play. If you think this isn't the case please tell the railway. Tell Passenger Focus as well (come to the AGM to tell them directly). Remember you can appeal. And, please, *copy us in*.

**We hope we *won't* be hearing from you. Glad to see you at the AGM though!**

[www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/rail/legislation/pf/](http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/rail/legislation/pf/)

[www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/Main.php?iCmsPageId=19](http://www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/Main.php?iCmsPageId=19)

[www.nationalexpresseastanglia.com/about\\_us/contact\\_us](http://www.nationalexpresseastanglia.com/about_us/contact_us)

[www.passengerfocus.org.uk](http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk) **08453 022 022**

### No surprises

The twenty most overcrowded trains in the country include: the **0715** Cambridge-King's Cross (the **0658** from Ely); the **0745** Cambridge-King's Cross (the **0653** from King's Lynn); the **1745** King's Cross-King's Lynn; the **1815** King's Cross-Ely; and the **1845** King's Cross-King's Lynn.

[www.dft.gov.uk/foi/responses/2008/auq/foiresponsesdespatc/h/congestiondata.pdf](http://www.dft.gov.uk/foi/responses/2008/auq/foiresponsesdespatc/h/congestiondata.pdf)

## Fenliner

That was the summer that was.  
It's leaves on the line time now!

In 1955 BR published their Modernisation Plan – dozens of new diesels that did not work and the demise of well-known makers of steam engines and electrical equipment. A dreadful waste of time and money and a missed opportunity to electrify all main lines and several secondary ones. Arguably, that has cost us even more.

Fast forward over 50 years and where have we reached in the use of today's technology? Not much further on it seems, as far as ticket machines are concerned!

The new machines are supposed to be a substitute for staff or - at the lucky stations that still have real people serving - an additional facility to speed buying a ticket. Fine when they work.

**Unless the sun is shining and it's impossible to read the information on the screen.**

All too often the machines simply don't work properly. They are out of order on far too many occasions and often for too long. With no permit to travel machines on our FCC stations, poor unsuspecting travellers have to persuade officials at some point on their journey that buying a ticket was simply not possible.

The connection with 1955 is that there appears to have been no realistic testing before putting equipment into service – again!

It stands to reason that a screen facing the sun is going to have reflection problems, whether it is vertical or angled. Solution – turn it round 180 degrees so the screen is shaded.

Likewise, make the machines able to withstand the attentions of increasingly sophisticated criminals.

The security industry has been making safes for over 200 years and it has just about got the hang of it by now. If that is seen as "over-engineering," bring in other protection – CCTV springs to mind.

With the huge increase in passenger numbers using our line, one might have expected more staffed ticket offices and longer opening hours to be a reasonable response to these two problems. Wouldn't one?

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

### Julian Churcher

#### Home station: Southampton Airport!

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

**JC:** Six or seven times a year.

➤ *Where do you travel and why?*

**JC:** I visit my sister and her family at Saddlebow, near King's Lynn,

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

**JC:** The trains had started to look a bit scruffy inside in recent years – I haven't been on a refurbished one yet. I do miss the trolley service and sometimes there is a lack of ticket inspectors. I don't like revenue being left uncollected – it's unfair because when there are people not paying - they're robbing us.

➤ *What's its best point?*

**JC:** Getting from King's Cross to King's Lynn in under 100 minutes. It's absolutely fantastic – particularly between King's Cross and Cambridge where the train goes like a bullet! I love that little café on King's Lynn station, too.

➤ *What's needed the most? Why?*

**JC:** 2 trains per hour to King's Lynn. That would make my journey so much more convenient. There are 3 trains per hour from Southampton to London – 1 an hour seems so old-fashioned and sleepy.

➤ *Anything else you'd like to say?*

**JC:** It takes about 4 hours for me to get to King's Lynn whether I drive or I go by train. It costs me £35 in petrol or £35 in fares. The train is much more civilised so I let it take the strain. I like to see the ever-changing countryside – I love the East Anglian flatness and it's great seeing it out of the train window, like a picture.

➤ *Finally, is FLUA worthwhile?*

**JC:** Very much so. It's like a trade union, standing up for the rights of the travelling public, without fear or favour. I've been a member for several years and am pleased to be associated with FLUA. Yes, definitely worthwhile.

## Waterbeach in figures

IF a new Chesterton station ever gets the ok, it could mean big changes for Waterbeach. Our survey had a look at how Waterbeach is used.

It wasn't scientific – the respondents were volunteers, after all. But they did tell us about more than 7000 journeys they make each year.

54% of respondents travelled at least 5 times a week (76% travelled at least weekly). 59% were from Waterbeach itself, almost exclusively getting to the station on foot or by bike. Another 24% drove to the station and 11% were car passengers.

Two-thirds of all respondents (65%) were travelling beyond Cambridge (59% to King's Cross, plus 6% to Liverpool Street line destinations) but a quarter (26%) were going no further than Cambridge.

### What about *when* people travelled?

'Peak' applies to trains arriving in London during the 0700-1000 period, as is rail industry practice.

Nearly two-thirds of all respondents (61%) travelled during the *peak*, 86% of these people making their journey five or more days a week. 71% of them were from Waterbeach itself (nearly all reaching the station on foot or by bike) with the remainder coming from such places as Cottenham, Landbeach, Milton, Somersham, Wilburton and Willingham. Non Waterbeach residents either drove to the station (21% of peak users) or were car passengers (7%).

**61% of *peak* respondents travelled beyond Cambridge (54% to King's Cross plus 7% to Liverpool Street line destinations). 36% went as far as Cambridge only.**

Turning to the *off-peak* (39% of all respondents), 44% of these travelled at least once a week. Fewer were from Waterbeach (39%) than from elsewhere – 61% had a different originating point, including Balsham, Cottenham, Histon, Landbeach, Milton and Swaffham Bulbeck.

44% said they used cars to get to Waterbeach (28% driving plus 16% travelling as car passengers). A further 44% got to the station on foot or by bike.

Nearly three-quarters (72%) of respondents using *off-peak* trains were journeying beyond Cambridge (67% to King's Cross plus 5% to Liverpool Street line destinations). 11% were going just as far as Cambridge; others were travelling northwards.

**So, peak or off-peak, most respondents went beyond Cambridge, largely to King's Cross. During the *peak* they were mainly Waterbeach people, getting to the station on foot. *Off-peak*, more came from afar, car users being almost equal in number to foot travellers. *Realistic results? Let us know!***

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### Lady in the Luggage Rack

by Mawrenna Gleid

AS YOU sprint into the last carriage, skinny latte in hand, pity the poor regular whose seat you've just usurped. Daily commuters are a pretty hardened breed, prepared for anything between having to stand all the way home to the complete cancellation of all services, but no regular can forgive having their seat stolen.

Taking a seat in a four is usually a safe bet, as most regulars sit alone, but even then some prefer to sit together on the grounds that each other's well-known bad habits are still better than yours are.

Once your suitcase-on-wheels is safely entangled with a couple of bikes in the doorway, take a sip of your overpriced coffee and glance round at your fellow passengers. Can you spot the regulars?

Well, anyone with a smile on their lips and a song in their hearts is definitely out, as are the American couple trying to control their six suitcases and dog. Rover, who starts howling as soon as the train jolts into motion, probably isn't a veteran traveller either.

But then there are the schoolchildren, pristine in their new blazers and still-shiny shoes – where are they off to, with not a teacher in sight? Well, the two biggest school runs are to Ely and to Cambridge, with Downham as a respectable third. The carriage sometimes more closely resembles 7B's favourite haunt behind the bike sheds than a passenger train.

So what about the elderly couple dropping their tickets every three minutes? The relentlessly competitive crossword solvers, tersely barking out clues across their neighbours? The giggling twelve-year olds discussing the weekend's escapades at the Pony Club? Sometimes it's hard to tell the perpetual nomads from the railway novices – tune in next time for a guide to some of the more exotic specimens.

*King's Lynn resident Mawrenna is a regular on the Cambridge Run.*

The new CIS screen at **King's Lynn** should be operational soon, with arrivals and departures. A planning application for the **Watlington** car park is expected soon. We agree the ticket machine can be hard to read when the weather is bright. The *Railway Arms*, complete with its own model railway, at **Downham Market** station proves there's life after the Post Office. The town won a Silver Award in *Anglia in Bloom*, the station playing a big part in this. The new ticket machine at **Littleport** should alleviate the previous card reader problems. We're still pressing for a bigger shelter on platform 2. The third ticket window at **Ely** is ready to use. There is land for potential car park extensions at **Waterbeach**. The roped-off platform 1 extension at **Cambridge** is ready for 12-car operations.

### Early Christmas?

FROM 13 DECEMBER *hourly* trains on Sunday mornings. 0658 Ely-King's Cross (0618 connection from King's Lynn) *non-stop after Royston*, arriving King's Cross at 0807. 1815 King's Cross-Ely *non-stop to Cambridge* (NXEA connection to Lynn). *New 1524 Cambridge-Waterbeach-Ely*. Welcome news here.

### So near, yet so far

I COMMUTE DAILY from King's Lynn to Cambridge, where I work as a software developer, **writes Brian Beckett**. You may have seen I maintain the FLUA website [www.flua.org.uk](http://www.flua.org.uk) as well. About the Waterbeach survey – Chesterton station would be only 5 minutes from where I work, instead of two bus rides across Cambridge. That would be brilliant!

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

Our thanks go to **Douglas Bush**, who has now stepped down from the Committee, after many years of being a strong and firm voice for passengers.

### Ten Years Ago

Overcrowding was in the news – we had asked WAGN for a relief train to help shift the Cambridge rush hour crowds. A new train leaving Cambridge at 1727 to Waterbeach and Ely was eagerly accepted. And Waterbeach station car park was opened at last!

### New machines

YOU can pick up pre-booked tickets from most – excellent. Note that "*Route: Cambridge*" tickets for Ipswich, Colchester, Chelmsford, etc *do* allow you to go via London. "*Route: Not London*" means...well yes you can go via Cambridge – but *not* London!

### Sssh!

"DID you know," **wrote Christopher Welton** on 13 October, "that the "Leaf Fall Timetable" starts today?

"If you travel from Waterbeach and could not second guess that it's 'about that time of year,' you would not have a clue.

"No posters, no announcements, no scrolling display messages!

"I have heard of 'stealth taxes.'  
but 'stealth timetables'?"

**"FCC are getting a lot right – but not this one."**

### Memo – things to do

... look at info on [www.thameslinkprogramme.co.uk](http://www.thameslinkprogramme.co.uk)

...remember...start 0658 Ely back at King's Lynn, extend 1815 to Lynn, as well... *that's* doubleplusgood!

### FLUA diary 2008

**Saturday 22 November - AGM**

2. 30 p.m. Green Quay, South Quay, King's Lynn