

# The Fenman

Newsletter of the Fen Line Users Association

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

[fenman@flua.org.uk](mailto:fenman@flua.org.uk)

## Issue 2/2009

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**.

**“Lands of the east awake!”** The great Victorian hymn moves on to another point of the compass when it calls, “Ye that have waited long.” No matter, it certainly feels as if it’s *us* who have been doing the waiting. Ten years ago we were calling for more trains, specifically for a half-hourly pattern of King’s Cross peak trains. And when we say half-hourly, we are talking about the arrivals and departures *there* – the outputs – not the time the trains leave our stations. **And from May? More and longer trains!**

Before there is a song in every heart, we need to point out that the ‘longer trains’ bit largely (not exclusively – 1714 to Ely! 1814 to Lynn!) applies south of Cambridge. That’s many more seats, especially as there are to be fewer stops between Cambridge and King’s Cross.

**More to do yet, of course. You need to look at the times shown on page 2 to see why we’d like those NXEA connections – invaluable as they are – to be replaced by through King’s Cross trains.**

Morning arrivals are more concentrated, though business users would welcome an earlier start from Lynn for Eurostar - out and back in a day becomes ever more cost-effective. The evening half-hourly pattern would be greatly improved by the 2045 running ‘all the way’ to Lynn.

**Further ahead, government is very clear about 125mph Intercity Expresses to Lynn, a Thameslink ‘Key Output 2’ route. Simple cross-platform interchange at Finsbury Park to bring the benefits of both?**

So what will it be? – page 3.

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### ‘To do’ list

#### Morning

- \* Start **0526** Ely-King’s Cross back at King’s Lynn.
- \* Replace **0519** King’s Lynn connection into **0615** Cambridge-King’s Cross with through King’s Lynn-King’s Cross train.
- Change **0618** King’s Lynn connection into **0654** Ely-King’s Cross to a through King’s Lynn-King’s Cross train.

#### Evening

- \* Relieve overcrowding from *Cambridge* – extend **1615** King’s Cross-Cambridge to Lynn.
- \* Extend **1714** King’s Cross-Ely to King’s Lynn.
- \* Run **2045** King’s Cross-Ely to King’s Lynn.

*Ensure these trains call at all stations north of Cambridge.*

THE FEN LINE



USERS ASSOCIATION

### Contacting FLUA

**Colin Sampson, Chairman**

Tel: (01366) 388003

or reach FLUA on:

e-mail: [secretary@flua.org.uk](mailto:secretary@flua.org.uk)

**Andy Tyler, Secretary**

Flat 4, 36 Nelson Street

KING’S LYNN, Norfolk, PE30 5DY

Tel: 07803 459 043

**John Legg, Treasurer**

**Robert Stripe, Vice-Chairman**

**The Fenman**

18 May 2009 – 11 December 2009

Mondays to Fridays

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**Morning peak**

	FCC	NXEA	FCC	NXEA	FCC	NXEA	FCC	NXEA	FCC	NXEA	FCC	NXEA	FCC
King's Lynn	-	0519	-	0618	0552	0618	-	0652	-	0723	-	0755	0755
Watlington	-	0526	-	0625	0559	0625	-	0659	-	0730	-	0802	0802
Downham Market	-	0533	-	0632	0605	0632	-	0705	-	0736	-	0808	0808
Littleport	-	0542	-	0641	0614	0641	-	0714	-	0745	-	0817	0817
Ely	0526	0552	-	0650	0622	0650	>	0654	0722	0730	>	0803	0825
Waterbeach	0535	0601	-	0659	0632	0659	-	0732	-	0804	-	0812	0835
Cam bridge	0545	0610	>	0708	0645	0708	>	0715	0745	0751	0815	0821	0845
Livepool Street	-	0734	-	0834	-	0834	-	-	-	0919	-	0949	-
King's Cross	0638	-	0715	-	0739	-	0806	0839	-	0912	-	-	0942

No of intermediate calls CBG-KGX

Change - mins to KGX

Max no of cars

**Evening peak**

	FCC	NXEA	FCC	NXEA	FCC	NXEA	FCC	NXEA	FCC	NXEA	FCC	NXEA	FCC	NXEA
King's Cross	1615	-	1644	-	1714	-	1744	-	1814	-	1844	-	1915	-
Livepool Street	-	1558	-	1658	-	1658	-	-	-	1758	-	1858	-	1858
Cam bridge	1704	>	1739	>	1805	>	1839	>	1905	>	1939	>	2008	>
Waterbeach	-	1728	1745	1820	-	1845	-	-	-	1925	-	1945	-	2021
Ely	-	1738	>	1830	1820	>	1856	>	1922	>	1935	1956	-	2031
Littleport	-	-	1803	1837	-	1903	-	-	-	1942	2003	-	2038	-
Downham Market	-	-	1812	1847	-	1912	1938	>	1938	>	1952	2012	-	2047
Watlington	-	-	1818	1853	-	1918	-	-	-	1958	2018	-	2053	-
King's Lynn	-	-	1828	1905	-	1928	1956	2010	1956	2010	2028	-	2105	-

No of calls south of CBG from KGX

Change - mins to CBG, ELY or KLN

Max no of cars

**Note 1 - there are other trains between Ely and Cambridge and vice versa.****Note 2 - please check all times before travelling.**

### **Best yet**

BUT far from perfect. That's our verdict on the May 2009 timetable. Of course, we're none of us ever going to be satisfied until we have a non-stop service to our own station, say (and let's be reasonable) every ten minutes or so!

Overall though, there *are* lots of improvements. Not only will some peak trains be longer, bringing more seats, but the overcrowding is also to be tackled by dropping many stops south of Cambridge, guiding short hoppers to other train services, not ours.

Even better, the 1714 is to run to Ely and the 1814 right through to Lynn. The only downside to these 8-car trains is that they cannot stop at the stations with shorter platforms. We acknowledge that this is currently impossible with today's equipment.

So, for now at least, the 1714 and 1814 (plus the new 0930 from Lynn to King's Cross on Saturday mornings) will run as expresses.

**In the longer term, new trains will be fitted with the 'necessary' to keep some doors locked at short platforms - or the platforms will be made longer. That's part of our interest in what'll run on the line come 2015.**

### **One, two, three**

THE BIG Network Rail investment programme for 2009-2014 includes much to untangle the various services running into King's Cross – stoppers, semi-fasts and 125mph Intercity Expresses – to free up capacity. A flyover at Hitchin, six lines for the last few miles into the terminus, and that new platform at King's Cross are all on the approved list.

So too is a new island platform at Cambridge – essential to run longer trains on both the King's Cross and the Liverpool Street routes.

[www.networkrail.co.uk/asp/5500.aspx](http://www.networkrail.co.uk/asp/5500.aspx)

### **...and counting**

MORE than 3 million Fen Line journeys in 2007-8, the latest ORR annual station usage figures reveal. Star of the show was Downham Market, with an 18% increase in the number of passengers. 58% of passengers use Ely and Waterbeach, with the stations north of Ely accounting for the other 42%.

[www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.1529](http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.1529)

### **Farsighted**

WE are delighted to say that the speaker at the AGM later in the year will be **Chris Curtis**, *NR Route Enhancement Manager for Anglia*. In response to our raising the 'last chance' future car parking BRB (Residuary) land at King's Lynn station, **Chris** has written to say, "You may know by now that Network Rail is in negotiation with BRB(R) to purchase the land, although we have yet to reach a settlement. Watch this space!" We reply, "Bravo!"

## **The Fenman Interview**

### **Julie Bower**

#### **Home station: Downham Market**

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

**JB:** I travel Monday to Saturday on the line.

➤ *Where do you travel and why?*

**JB:** Mainly for my work in King's Lynn – sometimes a trip to Cambridge for retail therapy!

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

**JB:** The worst aspect of the service is that most workers in King's Lynn finish at 1730/1800 but need to wait until 1836. A train at approximately 1815 from Lynn would be welcome.

➤ *What's its best point?*

**JB:** The best points? The Revenue Inspectors are friendly and helpful and the same goes for Ely station personnel. Also you get to talk to other regular travellers.

➤ *What's needed the most? Why?*

**JB:** What is needed the most is better communication to the passengers about Bank Holidays travel and engineering works arrangements. I usually have to ask for information which should be up on notice boards a week before.

➤ *Anything else you'd like to say?*

**JB:** On a final note, 99% of my time spent on the Fen Line makes me aware of what a reliable and valuable service it has to offer.

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

### **So what will it be?**

GOVERNMENT is to make the decision on what services in 2015, and after, will be like. We know that 100mph Thameslink services to Lynn have long been promised and we also know that 125mph 'IEPs' are intended for the Fen Line. We spoke to **Matt Dillon**, IEP sponsor at the DfT.

Everything is "subject to contract" but IEPs are to stop at *all* stations north of Cambridge, replacing FCC fasts, he told us. First and last trains and frequencies "will be at least broadly comparable to today;" improvements will be made "where we can"

**We say cross-platform changes at an 'IEP-ready' Finsbury Park for Thameslink to/from central London would combine speed *and* access!**

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### Down to the sea again?

**FIRST Eastern Counties** 40/40A/41/41A buses run between Lynn and Hunstanton - see FCC timetables. [www.firstgroup.com/ukbus/easterncounties/easterncounties/timetables/index.php](http://www.firstgroup.com/ukbus/easterncounties/easterncounties/timetables/index.php)

**NOW Norfolk Green** – as well as painting a pair of its buses in the old M&GN railway colours - is offering a “faster” service between the two towns. The Norfolk Green 35 service calls at Lynn station in *both* directions. [www.norfolkgreen.co.uk/timetables/betas/35.pdf](http://www.norfolkgreen.co.uk/timetables/betas/35.pdf)

### Or under it?

EUROSTAR tickets from Downham Market are now available – phone or internet booking, collect from machines – as well as from Ely and King’s Lynn. Book well ahead to get the cheapest fares, e.g. Lille £75; Brussels/any Belgian station £79; Paris £79; Aachen £107 – all from Downham and return. [www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/Main.php?iCmsPagelD=288](http://www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/Main.php?iCmsPagelD=288)  
[www.eurostar.com](http://www.eurostar.com)

Congratulations to FLUA Chairman **Colin Sampson** on becoming Deputy Mayor of King’s Lynn & West Norfolk.

NCC is proposing bus information screens at **King’s Lynn** station bus stops. The new screen on platform 1 does a fine job for departures but where is the promised arrivals information? Work on the car park at **Watlington** is due to start by August. There is a new help point on platform 1. NR is appointing design consultants for the proposed footbridge at **Downham Market** station. We are pressing for a car park extension. NCC is funding DDA-compliant benches. Planning permission for a cash machine is to be sought. At **Littleport** ECDC has offered funds towards an additional downside shelter and is to explore the possibility of extending the car park there. The subway at **Ely** has been fitted with anti-slip flooring and new handrails. ECDC is continuing to talk to Tescos about the long overdue safe pedestrian access route to the station. The DDA-compliant ticket office window is now in operation. CCC is to survey the old goods yard at **Waterbeach** to assess its suitability for an 80 space car park extension. A height barrier may be installed at the existing car park entrance. The upside platform waiting shelter is expected to be replaced.

### No deflation here!

FROM 17 May some railcard prices and associated minimum fares are going up. As ever, always check before travelling. [www.railcard.co.uk](http://www.railcard.co.uk)

### Train set

AGILTY TRAINS is the name of the preferred bidder for the IEP, using the 125 mph Hitachi ‘Super Express Train. Hitachi has said that its SET could run at 140 mph with “minor modifications.” Bring on cab signalling and away we go, then! [www.agilitytrains.com](http://www.agilitytrains.com)

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.*

### Howlin’ down the line

**GEORGE Chappell**, one of our members from King’s Lynn, is involved with a new project called SOS SAFE HAVEN. This has a voluntary crew that goes to the night spots of King’s Lynn and various other places to assist with people taken ill, drunk and such like.

On Friday 13(!) March, George got a call from the **platform staff** at King’s Lynn to say they had a confused/disorientated lady wandering around the station. **George** dispatched a team to the station; on their arrival, the lady was being given a cup of best platform tea. She was assessed by our medical team and taken back to the SOS SAFE HAVEN Unit.

The local police were then informed, as the 70 year old lady had managed to get from *Derbyshire*, with no means of getting back. Her relations were informed and she was later admitted to hospital for treatment.

**Without the prompt attentions of the platform staff at the station, though, we could have been telling a very different story about this cold March night!**

### Ten Years Ago

Writing an open letter to the then newly appointed SRA chief, the late **Sir Alastair Morton**, we said “FLUA is calling for a half-hourly set of arrivals at King’s Cross” in the a.m. peak. “There aren’t enough trains... [we’re] bumping against capacity limits.”

### Lady in the Luggage Rack by Mawrenna Gleid

AS SPRING turns slowly towards Summer (well, it hasn’t rained yet *this* week); have you noticed there’s a bit more space on the trains? They’ll still be overcrowded, of course, but as the Summer holidays come into view you can bid farewell to everyone under the age of 18... and perhaps snag a seat one or two stops earlier.

But that’s the nature of commuting: the march of the seasons isn’t something you can ignore. And even if you’ve just gone one-on-one with a suitcase twice your size for the right to lean in a doorway, why not peer out of the window and see what’s out there?

Misty mornings at Watlington are a thing of the past – have you spotted the turbines shining on the horizon at Littleport? Cygnets at Ely? The goat? For more experienced spotters, how about a Little Egret (hint: near Downham) or a fox? Go on – it’s practically an ‘I-Spy’ out there!

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

*Fenliner is on holiday.*

### Platform alterations

We send our best wishes to **Elaine Holt**, who has now stepped down as MD of FCC. **Elaine** was always ready to deal with things first hand (no pun intended) and we look forward to our paths crossing again some day! Welcome to new supremo, **Jim Morgan**.

**FLUA diary 2009**  
**Saturday 21 November**  
AGM, King’s Lynn.