

The Fenman

Newsletter of the Fen Line Users Association

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Issue 2/2010

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**.

“In whatever position you find yourself, first determine your objective.” Sound advice of long ago from the Allies' First World War hero, **Marshal Foch**, as well as timeless wisdom that we try to heed. We suggest FLUA's objective is both simple and clear: we work to develop services on the King's Lynn to Cambridge and London line. But it's not always just green signals ahead. Indeed, sometimes it feels as if we're running “on the block” behind an all-stations stopper, **start-stop all the way**.

Election times, like now, inevitably bring uncertainty, whether change is in the air or not. It takes a count to determine where the future lies. So, how ironic that another recent count established something else altogether in the air – Icelandic volcanic ash.

The ash grounded air travellers for days on end: suddenly the high speed rail alternative acquired a relevance to many who wouldn't have given it a second thought before.

Interesting, then, that China has recently come out with a plan for a 48 hour transit London-Beijing rail link, the infrastructure coming on stream within 15 years. Any Fen Line relevance here? Sure - catch one of our *direct* trains to King's Cross, stroll across the street to the nation's rail hub at St. Pancras International, and remember to take your chopsticks with you!

Foch, the victor, also said “my centre is giving way, my right is in retreat; situation excellent, I shall attack.” Big post-election rail decisions coming. Objective already determined!

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IEP - in sidings or in loop?

“The negotiations are for a contract of nearly 30 years, a multi-billion pound spend over the course of many Parliaments” **Lord Adonis** told Parliament on 25 February 2010, adding that he had ordered a full review into the IEP Intercity Express Programme. More when we have it.

www.dft.gov.uk/press/speechesstatements/statements/adonis20100226

Preferred bidder Agility Trains makes its case at: www.agilitytrains.com/agilitytrains_caseforiep.htm

For a Chinese alternative, see: www.csre.co.uk/intercity.html

More and longer trains

The government has approved the transfer of 8 more trains to FCC – more seats on GN services, starting in December!

www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/Main.php?sEvent=News&sFileName=News.php&ild=213

THE FEN LINE



USERS ASSOCIATION

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The Fenman 2/2010 Integrated timetabling

24 May - 12 December 2010

Mondays to Fridays

Not all services shown.

Check before travelling.

	1	3	5	7	9	11	13	15
Morning	FCC	NXEA	FCC	FCC	NXEA	FCC	FCC	NXEA
King's Lynn	-	0519	-	0552	0618	-	0652	-
Watlington	-	0526	-	0559	0625	-	0659	-
Downham Market	-	0533	-	0605	0632	-	0705	-
Littleport	-	0542	-	0614	0641	-	0714	-
Ely	0526	0552	-	0622	0649	> 0654	0722	0730
Waterbeach	0535	0601	-	0632	0659	-	0732	-
Cambridge	0544	0610	> 0615	0640	0708	> 0715	0740	0747
<i>Liverpool Street</i>	-	0734	-	-	0834	-	-	0919
King's Cross	0638	-	0715	0739	-	0806	0839	-
	17	19	21	23	25	27	29	31
Morning	FCC	NXEA	FCC	FCC	FCC	FCC	FCC	FCC
King's Lynn	0723	-	0755	0827	0859	0959	1056	1156
Watlington	0730	-	0802	0834	0906	1006	1103	1203
Downham Market	0736	-	0808	0840	0912	1012	1109	1209
Littleport	0745	-	0817	0849	0921	1021	1118	1218
Ely	0754	0803	0825	0857	0929	1029	1126	1226
Waterbeach	0804	0812	0835	0907	0938	1038	1135	1235
Cambridge	0814	0820	0844	0916	0947	1047	1144	1244
<i>Liverpool Street</i>	-	0949	-	-	-	-	-	-
King's Cross	0912	-	0942	1013	1046	1140	1232	1333
	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16
Evening	FCC	NXEA	FCC	FCC	FCC	NXEA	NXEA	FCC
King's Cross	1515	-	-	1545	1615	-	-	1644
<i>Liverpool Street</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	1558	-
Cambridge	1603	> 1612	> 1624	1635	1704	> 1712	> 1722	> 1739
Waterbeach	-	-	1630	1641	-	-	1728	1745
Ely	-	1626	1640	1650	-	1726	1738	> 1755
Littleport	-	-	-	1657	-	-	-	1803
Downham Market	-	-	-	1706	-	-	-	1812
Watlington	-	-	-	1712	-	-	-	1818
King's Lynn	-	-	-	1721	-	-	-	1828
	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32
Evening	FCC	NXEA	FCC	FCC	NXEA	FCC	FCC	NXEA
King's Cross	1714	-	1744	1814	-	1844	1915	-
<i>Liverpool Street</i>	-	1658	-	-	1758	-	-	1858
Cambridge	1805	> 1814	1839	1905	> 1919	1939	2008	> 2015
Waterbeach	-	1820	1845	-	1925	1945	-	2021
Ely	1820	> 1830	1855	1918	> 1934	1955	-	2030
Littleport	-	1837	1903	-	1942	2003	-	2038
Downham Market	-	1847	1912	1936	> 1951	2012	-	2047
Watlington	-	1853	1918	-	1958	2018	-	2053
King's Lynn	-	1905	1928	1953	2010	2028	-	2105
	34	36	38	40	42	44	-	-
Evening	FCC	FCC	FCC	FCC	FCC	FCC	-	-
King's Cross	1945	2015	2045	2115	2215	2315	-	-
<i>Liverpool Street</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cambridge	2040	2110	2135	2208	2308	0013	-	-
Waterbeach	2046	2116	2141	2214	2314	0019	-	-
Ely	2055	2125	2152	2223	2323	0028	-	-
Littleport	2102	2132	2200FO	2230	2330	0036FO	-	-
Downham Market	2111	2141	2209FO	2239	2339	0045FO	-	-
Watlington	2117	2147	2214FO	2245	2345	0050FO	-	-
King's Lynn	2126	2156	2224FO	2254	2354	0100FO	-	-

Flanking manoeuvres

'EVIDENCE' is the title of the book that launched FCC's new book club. Our page 2 shows evidence of rail industry integration.

It may take a moment to see that the Fen Line front involves *three* franchises. Let's take FCC's King's Lynn-King's Cross as our centre. NXEA's Liverpool Street route is fairly obviously on our left flank, then; but who exactly is on our right?

Our evidence concentrates on Monday to Friday commuter and business trains. From this it's easy to show the excellent integration of FCC and NXEA services, which (perhaps surprisingly to those who think this can't be done under a system of franchises) mesh well, to produce a whole so much bigger than the sum of its parts.

Any lingering doubts should be routed by studying how NXEA train 3 feeds into FCC train 5. Train 3 gets to Cambridge earlier than it would otherwise to facilitate a King's Cross connection (which arrives there 19 minutes earlier than train 3 itself reaches Liverpool Street).

That's timetabling integration – look too, say, at trains 7 and 9, or at the many examples in the evening homewards direction.

So, who *is* on our right flank? *East Coast*, of course! FCC trains have to be integrated very carefully to fit into the ECML timetable, another factor in Intercity Express Programme thinking.

Two franchises, Greater Anglia and East Coast, have both been the subject of government consultations in the last few weeks.

In submitting our evidence-based responses, we have asked the government to make this existing timetabling integration a formal franchise requirement.

www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/closed/2010-07/

www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/closed/2010-08/

Longer platforms

NETWORK RAIL'S 'Control Period 4 Delivery Plan Update,' covering approved budgets to 2013/14, has much of interest in it. Sorry for the lengthy web link!

Its section 12 sets out IEP works for the 'East Coast Main Line, including Hitchin to Cambridge and Kings Lynn.' There are some big hitters there, like Hitchin flyover, as well as power supply and gauging works.

Very welcome too are the platform extensions it lists for Littleport, Waterbeach, and Watlington.

www.networkrail.co.uk/browse%20documents/StrategicBusinessPlan/Delivery%20Plan/2010/Enhancements%20Document%20March%202010.pdf

The Fenman Interview

Christine Kidd

Home station: Ely

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

CK: I've commuted virtually five days a week since April 1988! Originally from Huntingdon, then Ely after electrification – I use the 0526 (why can't we early risers have a discount on the cost of an annual season ticket for this train which arrives at King's Cross before the morning peak?).

➤ *Where do you travel and why?*

CK: King's Cross - then to Victoria on the Underground - I'm the theatre manager of a private hospital in Chelsea.

What's the service's worst aspect?

CK: Two joint firsts: 1) Overcrowding during evening peaks and 2) Lack of reliable information when things go wrong. These are followed closely by a seeming inability to manage incidents to minimise the impact on service and an apparent absence of managerial staff of an appropriate calibre. Note: apologising for a delay 'due to late arrival of the incoming train' is NOT an explanation! Why is the incoming train late? I also hate the congestion at the barriers on platforms 9/10/11 at King's Cross - they are poorly located and invariably occupied by a bewildered tourist carrying his home with him.

➤ *What's its best point?*

CK: When all goes well, speed, reliability and train frequency. I also think that the Ely station staff do a terrific job, despite some of the 'nonsense' from management.

➤ *What's needed the most? Why?*

CK: How much time do you have? Better day to day management of resources including staffing: I can just see my credibility go down the sluice if I had to cancel operations because I had failed to roster scrub nurses! Longer trains will help, but they need to run through to King's Lynn to be fully effective.

➤ *Anything else you'd like to say?*

CK: Could we not have the reinstatement of the Finsbury Park stop on the 0526? It makes the change a great deal easier and would reduce congestion at King's Cross Underground. I find that my annual season ticket has to be replaced several times each year because it's not tough enough to take the automatic barriers - can we have Oyster compatibility or an Oyster look alike? What about a card operated barrier on the upper car park in Ely? It's supposed to be for season ticket holders only.

➤ *Finally, is FLUA worthwhile?*

CK: It's incredibly useful - especially in providing advance notice of changes and as a forum for passing on moans (like these) to FCC.

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What next?

KL&WN COUNCIL has ruled out Network Rail's footbridge proposals for Downham Market.

The main station there dates from 1846; the newer western side buildings are from 1881. A century later, the 1980s platform lengthening followed, then came the 1990s insertion of steel masts and associated overhead electric wires.

The station is a Listed Building and the footbridge has now been judged as failing to make a positive contribution to the setting of the "heritage asset." Permissions refused.

More to it than that: NR's proposals envisaged the steps-only footbridge replacing the barrow crossing. The Council ruled the scheme's "poor" accessibility wouldn't permit social inclusion.

We asked for "planning gain," seeking more car parking where the siding would have been foreshortened. We suggested that any approvals be conditional upon alternative step-free access.

Our understanding is that the Secretary of State for Transport can make an Order to remove the barrow crossing. In that event, only the railway industry and Passenger Focus would have to be consulted; nobody else, including the Council, is involved.

On 27 April, we watched down evening arrivals at Downham, seeing people surging towards the barrow crossing – about 70% using it to cross.

Small wonder then that NR, in their planning applications, acknowledge that relying on the level crossing *alone* "would transfer the risk to the public highway...increase risk to road users."

Indeed, NR's planning applications are clear that solely relying on the level crossing for movements between platforms "is not acceptable as a stand alone solution." Amen.

Authorising the barrow crossing's removal without replacement wouldn't be discriminatory – it would disadvantage us all – but it would be an intensely *political* decision. Cool heads needed!

www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/pdf/dcb120410MINS.pdf

Due process

THE PUBLIC INQUIRY into NR's capacity creating Hitchin flyover proposals starts on 11 May at Letchworth.

www.persona.uk.com/hitchin/index.htm

Join us from only £4.50 a year! 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.

Potters Bar Inquest

On Friday 12 May 2002, the 1245 King's Cross-King's Lynn derailed at Potters Bar. 7 people died. The various investigations have been necessarily slow and thorough. It is only now, 8 years on, that the Inquest is to be held. Also taking place at Letchworth, it will start on 1 June.

www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.1205

www.pottersbar-today.co.uk See 15 April 2010

Moving forward

As from Friday 26 February, writes FLUA Chairman **Colin Sampson**, there are working 'help points' on both platforms at Downham Market. This is significant progress indeed!

However, continues **Colin**, the CIS software has continued to blight the display of useful information on the booking hall screen.

Incidentally, the platform screen at King's Lynn now shows arrivals as well as departures, at last.

Smoke and fire

Big hold ups on Saturday 27 March when Cambridge station had to be closed because of the fire at the adjacent disused Spillers building.

St George's Day

Often seen at Lynn station, helping passengers in trouble, FLUA member **George Chappell** has won the Mayor's Award for Voluntary Service.

Late night extra

Opinions seem evenly divided as to whether a 2315 or a 2325 from Kings Cross would be better. But on Mondays to Thursdays, NR needs their overnight maintenance period on the single-line sections north of Littleport – amid much talk of a '7-day railway,' more reason to *redouble* the line to get round this?

Ten Years Ago

"By 2020 we expect to see much faster services and much greater frequencies, all on a 24-7 basis." That was our millennium prediction! In short, we said, "more and longer trains are the real answer."

More figures? Better be good!

THERE are 75 stations in East Anglia. And, according to ORR data for 2008/9, the Fen Line has *two* in the "Top Ten," **Ely** at number 6 – with 1,599,592 users – and **King's Lynn** in 9th place – 746,662 users there. The lowest ranked Fen Line station was **Watlington**, coming in at number 34, with 111,876 passengers.

But **Watlington** – along with **Waterbeach** – is a star when it comes to percentage growth; *both* are up by +11%. The others are as follows: **King's Lynn** +10%, **Ely** +6%, **Littleport** +5%, and **Downham** +2%. Overall Fen Line 2008/9 growth +7% - ok, that's good!

www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.1529

FLUA diary 2010
Saturday 27 November
AGM, King's Lynn.