

The Fenman

Newsletter of the Fen Line Users Association

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Issue 4/2010

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**.

"I become Portion of that around me," wrote Byron, contrasting the calm feeling of high mountains with the "torture" of the hum of human cities. You can tell that, though he was a Cambridge man, the great voice of Romanticism was not a Fen Line commuter – "torture" indeed! Mind you, given all that crowding, quite a few of us feel that we too become portion of that around us, especially during the peaks – human crush variety! Still, for the part of the journey south of Cambridge at least, **some relief is at hand.**

Byron's melancholy soul would surely have detested the changes brought by the iron road. But he was born too early to see much in the way of railways.

Yet it was only *fifteen* years after his death, that Parliament was excited about operation of the very first through carriage (from Preston to London, 1839).

Portion working has a long and proud history. Just take "The Fenman" in the days of steam, with its through carriages for Bury and Wisbech. It's the future too - take the newly-announced plans for St. Pancras-Amsterdam/Frankfurt trains, splitting and attaching at Brussels.

Come December, the 1814 Kings Cross-Kings Lynn is to become 12-cars long, dropping a 4-car portion at Royston to call at all stations between there and Cambridge. Called "a 21st Century version of the slip coach," it's a way of delivering service for more customers.

'IEPs' would bring longer portions north of Cambridge (Thameslink is another story). Fine tradition, fine future – so, note to Coalition government, when's the decision?

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Annual General Meeting

Saturday 27 November 2010
at the Good News Centre, St, John's Church,
Kings Lynn at 2 p.m.

Turn left outside station – the church is in front of you
(use main entrance facing the parking area).

Our guest speakers will be

Chris Patman
Senior Commercial Manager
First Capital Connect

Jon Hill
Service Development Manager
First Capital Connect

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

Andy Tyler, Secretary 3 November 2010

STOP PRESS!

From 13 December passengers for Kings Cross
0806 arrival change at Cambridge, NOT Ely!
The connection departs Cambridge at 0715.

Not all timetables make this clear!

THE FEN LINE



USERS ASSOCIATION

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Robert Stripe, Vice-Chairman

Damned serious business

SO said the great **Duke of Wellington**, reflecting upon Waterloo. And looking at the Kings Cross rebuilding and the plans for major improvements to the East Coast Main Line (all good news for Fen Line passengers) he might also have said, "beginning reform is beginning revolution."

Actually he did, being strongly against political change. How he would have coped with today's demands for change in the railways – in 1830 there were very few lines – we don't know, but we *do* know today's Coalition government is all for it.

Longer franchises in return for serious investment, plus better outcomes for passengers, that's the gist of their intent. So they've asked for views.

We're seeking formal co-ordination of franchises to keep – or, better still, enhance – the Fen Line timetable. Without contractual obligation for a *serious* timetable, all the other relevant passenger outcomes, cleanliness, punctuality, and so on, could so easily become mere frills.

The most important outcomes are the quality of the Fen Line timetable for journeys to work and business travel to Cambridge and London, and the comprehensiveness of what the retail trade would call the overall timetable "offer."

Like **T.S. Eliot**, we have "evidence and no doubt" in making our case. So we have provided the government with a list of our service development aspirations, our analysis of the inexorably improving passenger "metrics" – objective factual measures – since the Fen Line was electrified back in 1992 and our demonstration of how the current FCC and NXEA timetables mesh to make a whole greater than the sum of its parts,

We take these matters so seriously that we've included a supplement with this issue of The Fenman, so you can see the evidence yourself!

www.flua.org.uk/documents/FLUA%20response%20to%20Reforming%20Rail%20Franchise%20October%202010.pdf

Just down the line

Another day, another consultation. This time it's NR's "East Coast Main Line 2016 Capacity Review." That's pretty serious stuff too, given the train congestion that's building up. Fortunately, *all* NR's future scenarios envisage 2 high-speed train paths per hour each way for Cambridge "fasts" – i.e. non-stop on the ECML between Kings Cross and Cambridge.

Important news for us – over 60% of current "fasts" run beyond Cambridge to Ely/Kings Lynn.

www.flua.org.uk/documents/FLUA%20Response%20to%20ECML%202016%20Capacity%20Review%20consultation.pdf

Fenliner

This column is one of those marvellous ways where we can criticise or praise our railway depending on the situation at the time of writing.

In general, our trains are arriving at their *destinations* on time. This is good.

In line with a promotion from Passenger Focus, I support the campaign to get the idea of 'on time' meaning just that – 'on time' being within the minute of the time in the timetable and at intermediate stations, as well as at the end of the line.

That is not too much to ask for, is it?

I have recently taken time out to take advantage of the FirstGroup "Club 55" promotion. It is very good. The current offer finishes at the end of November, so if you qualify and want to take part, get a move on!

Please FirstGroup, bring this offer back to us in the FCC area next year!

At the time of writing, I have not purchased the new all-line timetable, but I hope the new one has mileages for each timetable route.

There are more enthusiasts out there than are imagined by the industry in general.

We need to be fully and properly informed to be able to advise all the occasional travellers so they have confidence in us and will therefore travel a second (or more) time on our railway and the many lines beyond our local patch.

Those of us who travel regularly and frequently are the best advertisements for train travel that any line can have –

provided performance matches our enthusiasm!

Happy travelling!

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

News and views, please, to:

fenliner@flua.org.uk

Crowd dynamics

KINGS LYNN: normal peaks and troughs, but an average 47 passengers on/off per train (Cambridge 68). Better than Inverness (45), Norwich (43), Clacton (39), Stratford-upon-Avon (36), Royston (34), Weymouth (29), Yarmouth (29). Northampton (27), or Hastings (20). More trains at many, like Ely (29) of course, but also bear in mind that Kings Lynn station handles *almost twice* the throughput of Norwich Airport!

www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.1529_-2008-9_stations_data
www.caa.co.uk/docs/80/airport_data/2009Annual/Table_01_Size_of_UK_Airports_2009_Comp_2004.pdf CAA – 2009

Thomas Cook European Rail Timetable June 2010

The Fenman Interview

Tony McGeorge

Home station: Downham Market

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

TMcG: Every weekday.

➤ *Where do you travel and why?*

TMcG: I commute into Cambridge every day where I work as a manager in a bookshop chain.

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

TMcG: I suppose everyone asked that question would mention overcrowding. I never catch the 1739 from Cambridge if I can avoid it, for that reason.

➤ *What's its best point?*

TMcG: There are lots of good points, but the speed of the journey from Norfolk to Cambridge has to be right up there. In a car it could take twice as long, and personally, I'd rather be reading a good book than sitting in a traffic jam!

➤ *What's needed the most? Why?*

TMcG: Marketing. Because too few people realise how good this train line is, and presumably a service with more customers would mean more carriages and less overcrowding - or am I being naive here?

➤ *Anything else you'd like to say?*

TMcG: I think we're all very lucky: After all, apart from the efficiency of the service, there's the spectacular scenery; an American friend of mine called it one of the great train journeys of the world. Then of course there's the opportunity to read or to work, which adds a value in itself. So, despite the occasional overcrowded carriage, I look forward to my daily commute. And I don't suppose there are that many people who can say that!

➤ *Finally, is FLUA worthwhile?*

TMcG: Undoubtedly. It acts as a point of focus for the users, is straightforward to find - as it's easily visible at the stations - and is clearly sincere, aware of issues affecting the traveller and prepared to act on them.

Reflections

Andy Tyler writes: I believe in highlighting both the positive as well as the negative.

Firstly, let us give thanks we have a *generally* good service between Kings Lynn and Kings Cross/Liverpool Street. I was relieved on coming to Lynn from the Chiltern Line that such a service existed in what seemed to me, at the time, to be the sticks!

I do not own a car so I praise those who put hard work into getting the line electrified, just in time for my arrival.

I want to request that, when travelling, people respect others, whether that is not playing music too loud or not shoving onto trains (with or without bikes) when there is overcrowding, and just generally thinking about others.

Yes, I include those who like a drink on the train or who shout all the time, I think also of the man who recently took up quite a bit of time at a local ticket office with travel enquiries five minutes before a train departed, causing some to miss the train when he was not even travelling on it! Selfish, or what?

Think also of vandals and thieves who ensure that toilets and gates are closed prematurely so other, law-abiding, passengers suffer. The list is endless.

Although, quite rightly, we look to rail companies to improve the service, let us also look at ourselves sometimes!

Long time to ponder

A FAMILY of three has been sentenced to prison for stealing £16,000 from ticket machines and causing £118,000 worth of damage, Waterbeach being affected. CCTV and DNA provided hard evidence.

www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk/Main.php?sEvent=News&sFileName=News.php&ild=238

West Anglia

NXEA is taking delivery of 30 new class 379 trains for Liverpool Street-Stansted Airport/Cambridge services. Good news - we can expect to see them run from Liverpool Street through to Lynn, *and* maybe half-hourly Cambridge-Stansted services.

A major NXEA 'West Anglia' timetable recast will be needed in December next year. *Big threat* (we need to keep FCC and NXEA services still interlocking) or *big opportunity* (new trains and airport access)?

We've been talking to FCC's **Jon Hill** and NXEA's **Shane Young** and are optimistic of a good outcome.

NR is upgrading power supplies at Milton, north of Cambridge, and elsewhere and lengthening platforms for 12-car West Anglia route operations.

Want to see inside a new Liverpool Street 379 train? Take a look at the video of the unveiling of the first one off the assembly line (you'll be in good company - FLUA's very own **Robert Stripe** is in it!).

www.cambridge-news.co.uk/Home/Video/Video-New-high-speed-Cambridge-to-London-trains-unveiled.htm

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Crowd shifters

THE DECEMBER timetable envisages the following changes: *Mons-Fris*: **0526** Ely-Kings Cross to start back at Kings Lynn, calling at all Fen Line stations; **1744** and **1814** Kings Cross-Kings Lynn trains both to stop at Royston (the **1814** is the one that 'slips'); **2045** Kings Cross-Ely extended to Kings Lynn (as it does now on Fridays only) calling at all Fen Line stations. *Sats*: new **1815** Kings Cross-Kings Lynn, calling at Cambridge, Ely and Downham Market only; *Suns*: new **1758** Kings Lynn-Kings Cross, calling at all Fen Line stations to Cambridge, then non-stop to Kings Cross. *Check before travelling!*

Star system

MOBILE and credit/debit card handy? You can pay to park at FCC stations without using a ticket machine!
<https://fcc.myringgo.co.uk>

Zooming in

NATIONAL RAIL ENQUIRIES now includes diagrams of where facilities are located on platforms; e.g. for Ely:
www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations/ely/details.htm

Cambridge CB1

ALL the details of the 'CB1' development at:
www.brookgate.eu/index.php?/projects/cb1

More reflections

FRIDAY 10 May 2002, 1245 Kings Cross-Kings Lynn - derailment at Potters Bar with a loss of 7 lives. At the recently concluded Inquest, a jury found failures of inspection and/or maintenance of points. Transcripts at:
<http://pottersbarinquest.independent.gov.uk>

Wider still and wider

EU GOVERNMENTS have been consulting on the future shape of the Trans European TEN-T Network. Our government's position is to "maintain current UK TEN-T routes" – important for funding. We have asked that the future TEN-T Network includes the Cambridge-Hitchin section, which links the "conventional" Liverpool Street-Kings Lynn TEN-T route to the ECML "high speed" TEN-T route and which Fen Line trains use to reach Kings Cross.

Disorder, horror, fear and mutiny

DISTURBING reports reached us on Friday 29 October, after the 1615 down "fast" failed at Foxton, meaning no trains between Royston and Cambridge - buses had to reverse '*dangerously*' through huge unsupervised crowds at Royston; nobody realised that the A10 Foxton level crossing was *closed* by the broken-down train; police involved....hmm. Next time?

Renewals

OUR 'fares' – subscription rates - are *not* going up! Renewal forms, where appropriate, have been sent out with this issue.

Join us from only £4.50 a year! FLUA Membership, 67 Goodwins Road, KINGS LYNN, Norfolk, PE30 5PE 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.

Lady in the Luggage Rack

by Mawrenna Gleid

It's not a *train station*, one of my commuting friends insists. Ah, but the station is where the train *stops*, someone else always counters.

When you think about it, a railway is basically a mechanism for moving people and their belongings. Despite multiple uses, a station's function is to transfer people from pavement to train. Crowding is now a fact of life *north* of Cambridge and a station should let people move smoothly through it, even at peak times. We all want faster trains, so why not faster stations?

Let me explain, using Kings Lynn as an example. The main entrance is at the front, plus two side gates on platform 1 and another on the old platform. Disembarking passengers can leave the station in three separate directions without the pushing and shoving seen at Cambridge. Last minute arrivals from the Matalan side can run straight on to the platform without a time-consuming dash round the building.

At least until recently, when two of the side gates were locked. The choice is now between the main entrance and a gate opening from platform 1 onto the taxi rank. The taxi drivers probably think it's a great idea, but as far as I can tell no-one else does.

A friend was told that it's an attempt to prevent bike theft. As a walker, I can't tell you if it's successfully protecting bikes. I *can* tell you it's causing a surly and resentful crowd every evening. We've heard rumours of ticket gates coming to Lynn – which of course all honest travellers support – but I hope they think carefully about where they site them.

After all, a station is a place where the *train* stops moving – not where the people do. At least that's the theory!

Kings Lynn resident Mawrenna is a regular on the Cambridge Run.

Ten Years Ago

Not "one of ours," but on our tracks, a GNER train fatally derailed at Hatfield on Tuesday 17 October 2000. Inevitably weeks of WAGN "emergency timetable" were to follow, bringing extended journey times and a period of severe disruption to passengers.

Highflyer

THE MINISTER is "minded to make the Order" for the congestion-busting Hitchin flyover, subject to minor detailed changes, NR's solicitors and agents were told on 20 October.

FLUA Diary 2010

9 November - Lynn Buffet Centenary
27 November – AGM, Kings Lynn
12 December – The Christmas Fenman:
70013 'Oliver Cromwell' www.railwaytouring.co.uk