

SixShiresRail

Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire & Rutland

Newsletter for Railfuture East Midlands
& Lincolnshire branches

railfuture

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Editor's comment.....

In introducing this edition of SixShiresRail, can I first direct you to the back page and my reminder that the next issue (number 4) will be published in June, and the 'copy' deadline is 18 May? I have done this as I am aware that the content of this edition is rather biased towards the East of our area, and to point out that content is reliant on the material I receive.

Recently, the railway press has commented on rolling stock availability and concerns about the number of vehicles in storage. Elsewhere in this edition we note that passenger usage is slowly recovering post Covid, but lack of capacity soon results in overcrowding, as experienced by Tim Mickleburgh on page 9. This prompts the question: can the industry cope with increased usage?

Unlike the train operating companies, SixShiresRail has adequate capacity and would welcome your contributions to causing 'overcrowding' in its pages.

Phil Mason



Hull Trains promoting Family Friendly travel

Family Friendly Trains at Lincs AGM

Nick Flynn of the Campaign for Family Friendly Trains will be the guest speaker at the Lincolnshire Railfuture AGM on Saturday 16 March (*see page 5*). The Campaign for Family Friendly Trains is a group of parents and carers working for better facilities for children and their families on the UK rail network.

The Campaign wants the rail network to be designed with the needs of families in mind. Their priorities are:

- Reservable space for prams and pushchairs;
- Family friendly toilets and baby changing;
- Step free access and level boarding;
- Playful waiting rooms.

One of the Campaign's great successes has been London's King Cross Family Lounge which has opened next to the Travel Centre on the main concourse. It has a soft play area, "beach hut" style pods, with table-top games – and a giant Hornby train set which apparently appeals as much to adults as children. It is open to all passengers.

New research shows that family friendly travel across the UK rail network is not due to a lack of ideas and technology but a lack of implementation and determination. There is a gap in putting ideas into practice. Nick Flynn lives in Cambridge with his wife and two children and doesn't own a car. He wants to choose train travel for environmental reasons and because it can be more reliable, relaxing and enjoyable than driving.

Ann Hindley

A look at station footfall in 2022-23

Estimates of station usage 2019/20 compared to 2022/23				
Station	2019-2020	2022-2023	Main origin or destination station 2022-23	passengers
Burton Joyce	15,330	9,426	Nottingham	4,266
Cleethorpes	274,032	194,646	Doncaster	24,982
Crowle	26,898	5,770	Doncaster	1,632
Derby	4,220,014	3,377,304	Birmingham NS	434,080
Doncaster	3,946,406	3,634,522	King's Cross	768,924
Gainsborough LR	174,122	168,940	Lincoln	87,822
Grantham	1,390,648	1,260,424	King's Cross	565,244
Hykeham	183,026	113,218	Lincoln	52,124
Kettering	1,032,982	1,007,900	St Pancras	460,738
Lincoln	1,966,100	1,833,930	King's Cross	231,388
Mkt Harborough	898,058	762,792	St Pancras	372,536
Newark stations	1,669,702	1,393,298	King's Cross	530,378
Nottingham	7,864,690	6,739,558	St Pancras	972,724
Peterborough	4,934,692	4,519,016	King's Cross	1,922,702
Retford	541,674	519,868	King's Cross	200,828
Saxilby	75,654	76,160	Lincoln	56,316
Scunthorpe	396,638	253,186	Doncaster	44,806
Skegness	323,202	359,744	Nottingham	92,408
Uttoxeter	165,784	144,270	Derby	32,804
Worksop	474,830	420,094	Sheffield	159,686

<https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/estimates>

-of-station -usage

The annual station usage figures were released in December. These are for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. These are compiled for the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) and there is a link to their data portal at the end of this article. Not only can you see the current statistical release, but also a table of usage for each station going back as far as 1997.

Above is a table listing the main stations in our area as well as a few smaller stations that have been included to illustrate points made in this article. I have compared 2022/23 to 2019/20 which even though there was a Covid related fall off of

passengers from January 2020, as individuals became reluctant to travel, also saw some very strong passenger growth earlier in the year.

During 2022/23 we did endure a lot of industrial action on our rail network, so I do wonder if the figures would have been above 2019/20 levels if there had been a reliable service throughout the year. Cleethorpes and Scunthorpe were especially badly affected as their TransPennine Express (TPE) service became so unreliable with last minute cancellations, many potential passengers just gave up using rail. Scunthorpe also saw

◀ the hourly Northern service to Doncaster replaced by a rail replacement bus every 2 hours. Crowle is on this route. Locals tell me that rather than rely on the bus they drove to Thorne North to get a service from Hull.

You will see that the only station on the list where passenger numbers had recovered to pre Covid levels was Skegness and this is no doubt due to many East Midlanders choosing to take short breaks away locally rather than negotiate the Covid travel regulations involved in foreign travel.

The effect of East Midlands Railway (EMR) not reinstating all their services on Regional routes can be seen with Burton Joyce being used to demonstrate how passenger numbers collapse when a regular service is replaced by less trains at irregular intervals. The slow recovery at Hykeham shows how the actions of just one employer can make a difference. Pre Covid there were at least 50 passengers per day travelling by rail to the the video game software company near Hykeham station. It was not until spring 2023 when they started to require their staff to return to the office instead of working from home and,

even now, we are not seeing anywhere near 50 passengers getting off the 08:44 from Lincoln that we saw before Covid.

Gainsborough has tickets sold to/from Gainsborough stations with a computer algorithm based on passenger counts in the dim and distant past deciding the allocation between Central and Lea Road stations, so the true figure for Lea Road is probably around 170,500 which along with Saxilby demonstrates how stations with a large student use recovered quicker. I've included these two because I know them well, but no doubt readers will see other examples in their area in the ORR data table.

Mention of Gainsborough reminds me that Newark is similar, with tickets sold to Newark stations. In this case the split between Northgate and Castle was very unreliable for many years until an actual count on the stations was done around 2014. It is also getting more accurate due to many tickets sold on the ECML being advance tickets to specifically Newark Northgate.

Another new innovation this year has been to include the main origin or destination station for each entry.

David Harby

Hull Trains bid to serve Sheffield

FirstGroup have announced an application to operate an open access service from London King's Cross to Sheffield via Retford. This would be operated by their Hull Trains company and could start in June 2025.

The proposal is to initially run 2 return trips from Sheffield every day (including Sundays) with intermediate calls at Woodhouse, Worksop and Retford with the aim of increasing the number of services, if these are successful. The initial plan is to operate 5-car trains and, as the timescale to June 2025 is short, they would have to use currently available rolling stock.

With East Midlands Railway (EMR) already operating 2 trains per hour from Sheffield to London, this might seem an odd proposal, but there are quite a few factors in it's favour. From the east of Sheffield there is already a steady flow of passengers who choose to travel to London from Doncaster or Retford in preference to driving the shorter distance into Sheffield. The writer has friends from this area who make frequent rail trips to London for business as well as leisure, and they tell me that in their opinion, the overall journey experience and cost via Retford or Doncaster, including car parking, is "far superior". ▶

◀ Taking into account the overall journey time, there is a catchment area population of around 130,000 from Worksop and 220,000 from Woodhouse (which is convenient for the M1 and the Rotherham/Meadowhall conurbation). Another potential market at Woodhouse is the proposed Restoring Your Railway service from Barrow Hill, Killamarsh and Beighton to Sheffield Victoria.

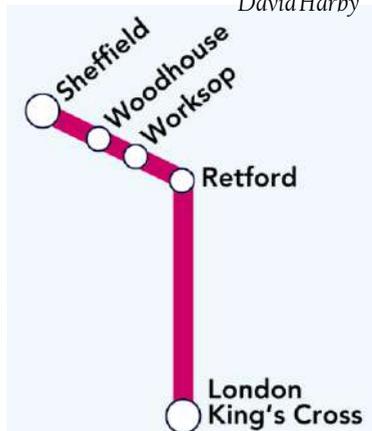
Another possible market they are targetting is the substantial number of coach passengers who travel to London from Meadowhall, especially if they offer the same very competitive fares that are generally available on Hull Trains services from Retford.

Currently the facilities at Woodhouse station are very basic with access to platform 2 only via a footbridge with steps. However, Hull Trains have recently spent £1.2m improving facilities at Howden station and they say they will aim to make

Woodhouse fit for purpose for long distance services. It is a pity the proposal for a new station nearby alongside the huge Waverley development, not far from Woodhouse, has not progressed further yet, as this would probably be a more suitable station for the service to call at.

This all looks very positive but there are plenty of possible pitfalls between an initial proposal and actual implementation. This service would have to find paths through the very busy Nunnery Junction just outside Sheffield station as well as on the ECML. I'm sure, in their application FirstGroup would have identified the paths they propose to use, but I'm equally sure existing operators will be objecting to the use of these paths on the grounds that they will make existing services more unreliable. There are also currently plans to use the paths through Nunnery Junction for extra fast trains to Leeds.

David Harby



Worksop Station (Nigel Thompson from internet)



Woodhouse Station (commons.wikimedia.org)

Railfuture Lincolnshire Branch

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday, 16 March 2024 at Grantham Museum

commencing at 12:30

Timetable:

- 12:00 Assemble – coffee or tea available from the Museum Coffee Bar
12:30 AGM (Agenda below)
14:00 Break
14:30 **Speaker:**
Nick Flynn of the Campaign for Family Friendly Trains
16:00 Meeting Closes

BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Dear Member,

The Annual General Meeting of the branch will take place on Saturday, 16 March 2024 at Grantham Museum, St. Peter's Hill, Grantham NG31 6PY.

AGM AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of 2023 meeting
3. Matters arising
4. Chairman's Report by David Harby
5. Hon. Secretary's Report by Dr Don Peacock
6. Financial Report – Branch Income & Expenditure Account
7. Election of Officers:
 - a) Chairman
 - b) Vice Chairman
 - c) Hon Secretary
 - d) other committee members
8. Any other urgent business (notice of items appreciated by Hon Secretary before meeting commences or telephone 01652 688549)

Yours sincerely, Don Peacock, Hon Secretary
1 Queens Road, Barnetby le Wold DN38 6JH. Tel: 01652 688549

No members contacted the Hon Secretary to stand for the posts of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Secretary and therefore there will be no candidates' statements published and no voting carried out at the AGM. Branch full members can volunteer to join the committee at the AGM. Dr Don Peacock, Hon Secretary

GETTING TO GRANTHAM MUSEUM

On leaving Grantham station cross at the zebra crossing and turn left down Station Approach.

Then right on to the footpath running alongside the NCP car park, bearing left into Railway Terrace, cross Grantley Street and stay on the footpath to Norton Street, then left to the end of Norton Street and join Wharf Road.

Cross Wharf Road at the pedestrian crossing then bear right to the Bus Station, go left alongside the Bus Station, and enter the Isaac Newton Shopping Centre, go right, opposite Ryman's Stationers and proceed to the shopping centre exit on St. Peter's Hill.

Go over the pedestrian crossing and bear right towards the Isaac Newton Statue. The Guildhall is behind the statue and Grantham Museum is to the right. Look out for banners outside the Museum.

Coffee and tea is available at the Museum's Coffee Bar and there are plenty of eateries close by, including Digby's Café next door in the Guildhall.

HS2 gives rise to a reborn Colwick Locomotive Works

Words and pictures by David Shaw (East Midlands Branch)

Rumours of a new locomotive maintenance facility at Colwick emerged in late Spring of 2023 when a planning application was submitted by Network Rail to Gedling Borough Council, the Local Authority responsible for Netherfield and Colwick. The application was for the

erection of two buildings, one of which was specified for a wheel lathe, at the former site of Colwick Sidings and latterly the site of the oil discharge facility. This part of the works site had remained rail connected, following the

closure and redevelopment of the rest of the site, to enable trains from the Lindsey refineries to bring oil to the large storage facilities at Colwick Industrial Estate. Planning approval for the new facility actually relied on enabling legislation in the original Ambergate, Nottingham & Boston & Eastern Junction Railway Act 1846 and the Great Northern Railway Act (Derbyshire & Staffordshire) 1871 and this is referred to in the application!

Some information had leaked out on social media, so in January 2024, I decided to find out what views were accessible from public rights of way. The entrance to the new facility is on Mallard Road, right at the end of the Victoria Park business park. [Photo 1 & 2]. The entrance road is muddy and the amount of deep tracks indicates that construction is still underway. I then backtracked along Mallard Road and followed the 'Ash Track', the rerouted

public footpath that leads around the perimeter of the large green educational supplier warehouse. Alongside the warehouse the path joins a Network Rail access road, which is gated beyond the public access limits. Alongside this road are remains of sidings, with rail hidden in



the undergrowth [Photo 3]. The public footpath exited this road to the right and then appeared to split into two. Instinctively I followed the left-hand fork, following the perimeter fence and this was the sight

that greeted me (Photo centre of this page). I hasten to add that this was taken from behind a fence, alongside the running rails. Up to this point I hadn't crossed a fenceline or passed any restricted access notices. Looking at some old photos afterwards, it appears that the path I had followed was the old access track for drivers to take out the old oil trains.

So it appears that the new Colwick depot is now operational and plenty of empty land still remains for expansion, if needed [Photo 5]. The return of loco maintenance to Colwick will doubtless stir emotions amongst seasoned railway folk, as well as initial disbelief. But how did HS2 influence the reopening of Colwick? Well the planning application had to justify the need for the new facility based on the lack of regional alternatives. The two alternatives under consideration in May 2023 were Coalville and Toton. With ►

◀ the Coalville site earmarked for the new station and Toton lacking capacity, in view of the planned HS2 developments, then, the application concluded, Colwick was the only regional option. If the application had been considered a few weeks later Colwick may well have been left to slumber...

The full planning application can be found at <https://pawam.gedling.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=RV9MB5HL0C A00>

There a video by Trekking Exploration on Youtube from 2020, which gives a useful overview of the site of the current development in the wider context of Colwick yard

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMWNBE5bjtU>

Futher info and discussion: <https://www.railforums.co.uk/threads/colwick-traction-maintenance-depot-nottingham.260218/>



Photographs: on previous page and 1, 2, 3 & 4 above by David Shaw.

Left: ariel view of the site prior to redevelopment by Rob Mccrorie on flickr.com

News from the EMR Stakeholder Conference

There was a good turnout of Railfuture members, many representing other organisations, at the annual East Midland Railway (EMR) Stakeholder Conference in January. As we have come to expect from EMR, this was a very well organised event with updates in the morning from EMR, Network Rail, DfT and Transport UK (EMR's owners) followed after lunch by workshop sessions where we were able to talk to specialists from within the EMR business.

This format is popular with stakeholders as it gives us plenty of opportunities to speak to the people within EMR and Network Rail who are making the decisions. A contrast to stakeholder events from some other companies where they spend most of the time talking at us with hardly any time given over for us to actually talk with them.

As might be expected in the current economic climate, the speakers made it clear that money is tight and we can't expect new or improved services unless there is a positive business case to pay for them. EMR

passenger numbers have recovered to somewhere near the pre-Covid levels, but the mix of passengers has changed, so there are more leisure passengers and less travelling on business at peak times. A consequence of this is that even though passenger numbers have recovered, revenue is still lagging behind.

They also referred to operational

challenges posed by the continuing industrial disputes and increasingly severe weather. Indeed, Network Rail described climate change as 'our biggest challenge'. Consequently, increased attention is being given to infrastructure condition and the management of drainage and lineside vegetation. Management of disruption was also one of the specific topics for the afternoon workshops. Information provision is a key part of this.

To add to the gloom, government funding to DfT is not rising, whereas TOCs are still subject to relatively high cost increases. TOCs are facing increased costs with no corresponding increased revenue, which means they are continually having to look for ways to increase efficiency. As anyone who has run a business will know this can't continue indefinitely and the time will

inevitably come when passengers will start to notice reductions in service quality.

A positive story is the progress with M M L electrification from M a r k e t Harborough to Wigston which is on time and under budget. This will aid Network Rail as they make the case

to DfT (and Treasury) for the next stage from Syston to Trent Junction.

In a discussion with a Network Rail representative one of our members was told that the pinch-point at Leicester could be largely removed if the main lines' speed restriction was raised to 60mph. Apparently, during the electrification of the MML through the station, the roof of ►



◀ the tunnels under London Road will be slightly raised and the width increased. This will enable all trains to go through much faster, as it is the present tightness of the tunnels which restricts speed. Although, at the moment, passenger trains all stop (and thus speed is not important) freight trains could be through the station quicker, coasting up towards Wigston North junction and thus Felixstowe to Nuneaton trains would be out of the way of any London-bound train before it leaves the station.

The photo on page 8 of a freight train entering the tunnel from platform 3 shows the difficulties faced electrifying the line. There is very little clearance above the loco and lowering the track isn't an option due to the proximity of the platform.

We will be seeing a refresh of the Class 158 and 170 units though exactly what this entails has still to be decided as EMR are awaiting a decision as to how much funding is available. In the meantime, refurbishment of the Class 360s on EMR Connect has now been agreed, and the refresh of the Class 222 fleet is under way in preparation for their new life with another TOC after the Class 810s replace them on the MML.

The first of the new Class 810 Aurora units is out on the main line for testing, with introduction into service sometime during 2025. Work on the new maintenance facilities at Derby Etches Park is now progressing well after the delays encountered following the original contractor doing the work, going out of business.

In terms of lobbying for improvements, the new Annual Business Plan (ABP) process, which replaces multi-year franchise plans, 'underpins everything'. We were advised by the DfT that stakeholder input needs realism, recognition of priorities and challenges, evidence to support proposals, patience, and celebration of success! *David Harby*

Doncaster No More!

I decided to treat myself to an outing to Doncaster to visit the Danum Museum and its two historic steam locos on display, including Green Arrow. Dad and I had tried to do the same journey 2 years previously, but we'd fallen foul of TransPennine cancellations and got no further than a pub restaurant near to Doncaster Station (called The Mallard appropriately enough!).

Alas this time I never even left Grimsby Town station! I got on board from a crowded platform, it being half-term. Not that I knew this, or I'd have planned my journey on another day.

Anyway I quickly looked up and down the carriage, only to find that they all had seat reservations. What's more none were from Doncaster onwards, the cards all referred to passengers getting on at stations between Cleethorpes and Doncaster. So I couldn't be certain that I wouldn't have to stand for at least part of the way: normally some of the reservations only apply to the latter part of the route after I'd got off the train.

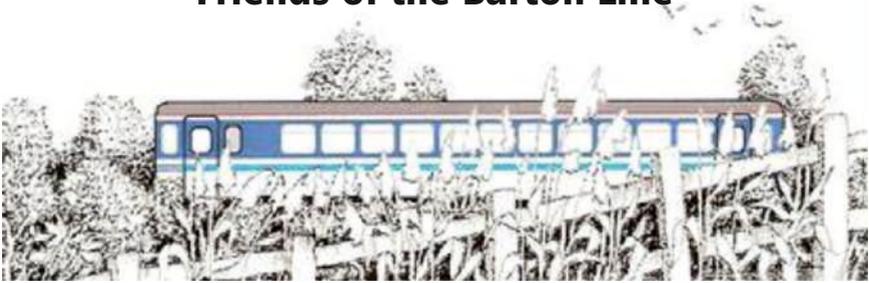
Now I don't feel safe standing, whether on a bus or a train. Thus I quickly dismounted before the doors closed, hot-footed it back to the ticket office and was given a full refund after explaining the situation.

On reflection, I feel it is possible that not everyone would have taken up their seats. But why this emphasis on seat reservation? It does deter the casual traveller, those not wanting to plan a journey in advance.

It's a far cry from my trainspotting days when I could use a Student Railcard and get half an Awayday for the following morning!

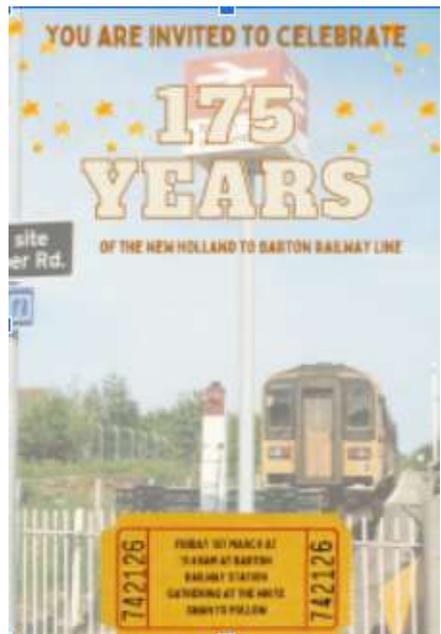
Tim Mickleburgh. (Lincolnshire Branch)

Friends of the Barton Line

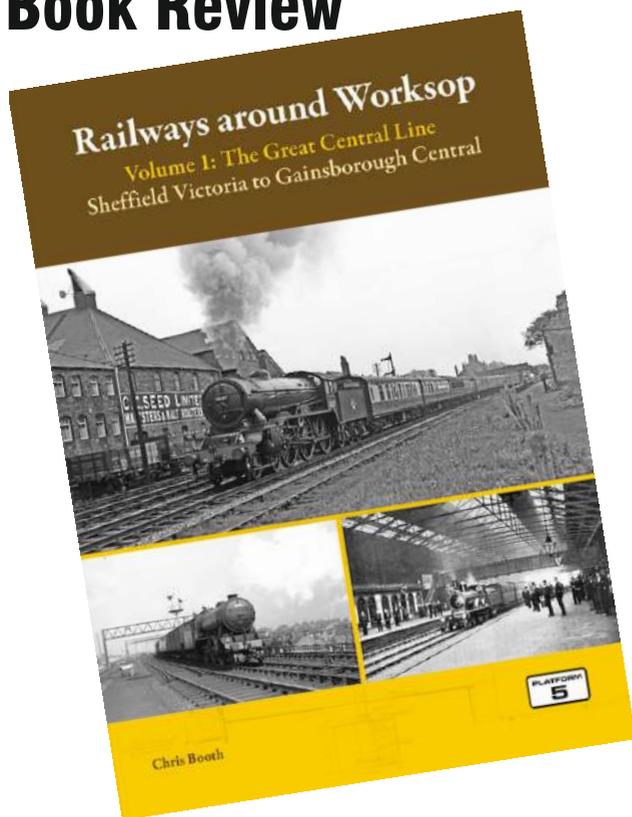


- Reliability on the line has remained reasonably constant, although the autumn leaves caused some delays of up to 15 minutes. Timings were also constrained by the short layover times at each end of the route.
- Towards the end of 2023, planters were due to be replaced at stations along the line and there was a need to provide water on site.
- On 2 November, a plaque was unveiled at Barton station by Mike Gathercole, Chairman of Barton Cleethorpes Community Rail Partnership, commemorating the life of Bartonian Rev. Chad Varah on the 70th anniversary of his founding of the Samaritans.
- Network Rail is renewing track between Barton and New Holland during the nights of 15-18 January, 26-29 February and 2-7 & 25-28 March. Work is also taking place during the daytime on Sunday, 3 March; this will not affect the times of passenger trains.

- On Friday, 1 March members of the Friends of the Barton Line are celebrating the 175th anniversary of the opening of the line from New Holland to Barton. Commencing with a ribbon cutting ceremony by the Mayor at the entrance to Barton station upon the 11:49 arrival of the 10:59 train from Cleethorpes.
- On Friday, 15 March Stephen Gay will give an illustrated lecture to mark the 150th anniversary of the Barton branch line at the Civic Society meeting at the Joseph Wright Hall. Commencing 7 for 7.30pm. (non-members admission £4).



Book Review



Railways around Worksop Volume 1: The Great Central Line by Chris Booth. Published by Platform 5. *(review by David Harby)*

This recently published book is the first of a series of three looking at the history of the railways around Worksop. During 2024 we celebrate 175 years since the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway opened the route between Sheffield Victoria and Gainsborough Central so it is fitting that volume 1 covers this line.

The author, Chris Booth, is a retired signalman who spent all his time on the railway in signal boxes in the Worksop area. His vast knowledge of the local railway from inception to now is evident in

this book which looks at the route from the beginnings in 1844 right through to 2023.

The book has six chapters looking at different aspects of the route. Each chapter opens with a few pages of explanation where the author's extensive knowledge and command of his subject is obvious. These are followed by pages of photographs which are in most instances accompanied by captions with detailed descriptions.

There is an excellent selection of photos and illustrations which have been sourced from the author's own collection and many other local names that this reviewer recognises.

The book is softback A4 format with 176 pages and over 200 illustrations. Good quality paper has been used so even illustrations and photos

from 100 years ago are reproduced clearly. In this reviewer's opinion an excellent book which is well worth the cost.

The book can be ordered from the publisher's website using the link below at the cover price of £29.95 plus P&P (10% to UK addresses). However, if customers enter the promotion code WORK at the basket, that will reduce the price to £27.95 plus P&P. Alternatively orders can be taken by phone on 0114 255 8000 – customers ordering by phone will automatically be charged the mail order price of £27.95 plus P&P.

Railways Around Worksop Volume 1: The Great Central Line: Sheffield Victoria to Gainsborough Central-Platform 5

GCR Singles Club? *Words and pictures by Steve Jones (East Midlands Branch)*

On Saturday 27 January 2024, I attended the Great Central Railway's excellent Winter Steam Gala. Though the emphasis was obviously steam, there were two other vehicles in service and another two present that I think deserve a mention, not least in the context of their significance to the modern and future railway.

First of these, and arguably the star of the show, was the North Eastern Railway 'Electric Autocar' No 3170. This was one of only two, first built in 1903 and used until 1931 on local services in the North East and Yorkshire. It was partly a response to tramway competition on Tyneside, which is reflected in its rather tram-like interior complete with throw-over reversible seats.

Also in service was an early Derby Lightweight single-car diesel unit, M79900 Iris dating from 1956. This delightful vehicle, also one of only two built, was a visitor from the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway, and spent the day trying to convince us it was going to Nottingham or Kings Lynn.

After a short life in passenger service on BR, it entered departmental use as Test Car Iris, which resulted in its survival for long enough to be saved for preservation.

Finally, and not part of the Gala, were a pair of Class 153 Sprinter single units. These have been acquired by the GCR for use as driver-training vehicles for main-line TOCs; part of the GCR's valuable supporting role for the 'big' railway. These were familiar to most of us as an often rather unloved previous part of the EMR fleet, as well as other TOCs.



NER 'Electric Autocar' (originally petrol-electric, but now equipped with a Cummins diesel engine), lays over north of Loughborough Central prior to working the 12:15 to Rothley Brook, these vehicles were quite some way ahead of their time.



Derby Lightweight single-car M79900 Iris, of 1956, waits at Rothley on a service to Loughborough Central.

- Built originally as 2-car Class 155s in 1987-8, they were split and converted to single car Class 153s by the addition of extra cabs in 1991-2. This was for use on more lightly used rural routes - including the 'InterCity Kitty' between Nottingham, Derby, Stoke-on-Trent and Crewe! It is rather pleasing to see two of them at the GCR and I hope at least one continues there in preservation after their present use has finished.



One of the two Class 153 Sprinter vehicles now on the GCR as main-line driver-trainers. This one, in the former London Midland livery, rests under the bridge at Loughborough Central.



Hiding under bridges seems to be a habit for Class 153s when they are asleep. This is 52308, in Stagecoach EMT livery, at the GCR's Loughborough depot on 27th January. If telegraph poles could compete for awards, the one in this picture would surely win gold.

130% Fare Increases!

On 5 February, LNER changed their fare model for three journeys – to and from London Kings Cross to Newcastle, Berwick-upon-Tweed, and Edinburgh Waverley. Under their new model, the only ticket that is guaranteed to be available is the fully flexible (anytime) single – the most expensive ticket. The cheaper, flexible, 'Super Off-Peak' ticket, valid for most of the day (and all day Friday to Sunday) is abolished.

The new ticket is the 'Semi Flexible – which LNER describes as 'Any valid LNER train, up to 70 mins before or after your booked journey' (although they haven't said what valid means). Like Advance tickets, this is a quota controlled ticket – ie there are a limited number of them for each service.

Railfuture looked at available fares at lunchtime today (Sunday 4 February) and confirmed that there are some services with a 130% fare increase compared to the

same service last week. This is because LNER have 'sold out' of their cheap, limited availability services for these services. Our samples include:

- * Newcastle departures to Kings Cross on Tuesday 6 February at 08:28, 08:58, 09:30 & 10:00

- * Edinburgh departures to Kings Cross on Tuesday 6 February at 07:00, 07:30, 08:00 & 08:30

- * The Berwick-upon-Tweed departure to Kings Cross on Tuesday 6 February at 09:48

Responding to tomorrow's start of these new fares, Neil Middleton, Railfuture Director, commented:

"The removal of the Super Off Peak ticket is an awful move. Just the possibility or having to pay over £192 for a railway ticket to travel between Kings Cross and Newcastle is enough to put you off travelling by train, possibly forever.

"Yes, it is quite possible to travel for a lot ▶

less, but if you need to travel unexpectedly or travel plans change, these are eye watering prices to pay. I think they are well beyond tolerable for most people's wallets and indeed most company's expense claims.

"But let's be clear – I do like the new semi flexible ticket – being able to vary my travel time by up to 70 minutes before or after is a real plus – the time a meeting, a meal and much more will end is often uncertain and that flexibility is a real benefit. But there is a big "but" – that the ticket may not be available when I want to travel.

"The walk up railway is such a crucial element of the service – to always be able to turn up and travel. And this must be at a sensible price at times of the day that can reliably be predicted in advance. And that is what the Super Off-Peak fare was – price certainty.

"Railfuture calls upon LNER to reinstate the Super Off-Peak fare immediately – but to then continue the rest of the trial to understand how much it will be used."

Jane Ann Liston from Railfuture Scotland went on to comment:

"These changes are very disappointing for Scottish passengers. It removes several options, and the remaining ones will not necessarily be cheaper or convenient. Far from making travel easier the new 'semi-flexible' tickets are more likely to make long journeys from Scotland more difficult, actually with less flexibility than previously."

Neil concluded by commenting:

"Yes, there are workarounds – eg rather than selecting Newcastle Central as your start or end point, choose Manors (which is just under a mile away), and it is still possible to buy a Super Off-Peak ticket, but those planning to travel really shouldn't have to know this. "And, just to rub salt in the wound, the new semi-flexible ticket isn't widely available – I've just looked on the Thameslink website and it isn't available at all. Trainline does sell them, but it isn't always clear – they prioritise the savings from offering split fares. Whilst we don't like booking fees, we do think split fares are usually the best option when available."

Railfuture Press Release

EDITOR'S MAIL



INCONSISTENCY

Dad and I recently went to Lincoln for the day. We left our outward half of the tickets on the train, as we didn't think they'd be needed again. But at the station we had to ask a guard to open the barriers for us, as Lincoln is a "closed" station.

Yet not everyone would know this, especially those of us travelling from Grimsby Town which is an open station. Why therefore is there this lack of consistency?

Tim Mickleburgh, Grimsby

Just the ticket

*A proposal preposterous and
wicked*

We were all getting ready to picket

But now we gave learned

The government u-turned

So it's now status quo

Just the ticket!

Written by Pete Fieldhouse,

friend of Ann Hindley's husband, Alan.

Restoring Your Railway to Mablethorpe and Louth is not simply a case of constructing a few miles of new railway?

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Readers may remember that there was a Restoring Your Railway proposal to reopen the East Lincs Line from Firsby to Louth along with the Mablethorpe Loop. At the time DfT decided not to fund an outline business case but instead asked Network Rail to consider the proposal as part of the Lincolnshire railway study they were carrying out at the time.

This study has now been published as Lincolnshire Strategic Advice – How can economic growth and connectivity be best supported by the rail network in Lincolnshire.

The document looks at all the Lincolnshire rail network and outlines what enhancements would be needed to make specific service improvements for both passenger and freight. I don't propose to look at these in detail except to say that they would all need levels of funding that are well beyond what is likely to be available for quite some time in the future. The population and employment figures quoted in the report help to explain why it is so difficult to make the case for any rail improvements whatsoever in Lincolnshire.

The average age of Lincolnshire residents is 45 years compared to a national average of 40 years. This might seem surprising when the large student population in Lincoln is considered but this is outweighed by East Lindsey where the median age is 52.9 years. Combined with this, Lincolnshire has a population density of only 129 residents per square kilometre compared to Nottinghamshire at 396 and Leicestershire at 342. Many readers will be aware that agriculture and the food sector is important to the area but

probably not how important where it supports 75,000 food sector jobs and accounts for 18% of all employment within the county whereas the national average is 4%.

The higher than average age profile and a concentration of employment in low paid food sector work leads to another factor that depresses potential rail revenue when calculating business cases. Of 21 English counties Lincolnshire is the third most deprived with especially high clusters of deprivation along the coast from Mablethorpe to Skegness.

From these statistics it isn't surprising that as far as a new railway to Louth is concerned the study makes it clear that the potential revenue from passengers alone would go nowhere near to making the proposal a viable proposition. However, there is an additional factor which makes the proposal worth further consideration – the proposal for a Geological Disposal Facility (GDF) for disposal of nuclear waste under the seabed at the site of the former Theddlethorpe Gas Terminal (north of Mablethorpe). If this was to go ahead then new infrastructure would be needed, so this could be rail served, which would provide the opportunity to add on passenger services to Mablethorpe and Louth.

Most likely is a route from the existing railway at Firsby to a site at the eastern side of Louth via the GDF with Mablethorpe served by a branch from the through route. There is a suggestion that if it has a connection from the North it would be routed to the west of the old ELR route so as to serve Humberside Airport. Much of new construction would likely need to be on an embankment so as to avoid the need for level crossings and provide resilience

◀ from the effects of climate change.

In addition to the new railway, considerable enhancements would be needed to the railway between Sleaford and Firsby. Doubling would be required between each of Sleaford and Heckington, Hubberts Bridge and Boston and Boston and Sibsey. Allied to this the indications are that to provide capacity for hourly passenger and freight services a signalling upgrade would be required. If the passenger service was to go to Peterborough there is also a suggestion that a chord would be needed from the Skegness route to the GNGE Joint Line south of Sleaford as well as signalling enhancements between Sleaford and Quadring (just north of Spalding).

All this extra work needed highlights a situation that is often encountered, which

is that what seems to be a simple scheme covering a relatively short section of track soon turns into a major scheme costing far more than expected because our existing railway is at or near capacity in many places – or has been so diminished by past economy measures.

For anyone who wants to read the study the whole document can be found at this link:

<https://sacuksprodnrdigital0001.blob.core.windows.net/regional-long-term-planning/Eastern/Lincolnshire%20Strategic%20Advice%202023.pdf>

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