

# Marpa

Mid Anglia Rail Passengers' Association  
[www.marpa.org.uk](http://www.marpa.org.uk)

Published by MARPA

Edited by Peter Rutt

Tel: 01359 242464

e-mail: [peterrutt06@aol.com](mailto:peterrutt06@aol.com)

## Spring 2011 Newsletter

Welcome to the Spring 2011 newsletter. It has been a hard December for the railway with the record low temperatures, but Marpa have not received any complaints – have lessons been learned? If there are any examples of good or poor customer service in bad weather please let us know. Our line has also featured in Michael Portillo's 'Great Railway Journeys' when he visited Newmarket (in the summer!). The station adopter at Newmarket (a Marpa committee member) was delighted to see positive coverage of the station and local area.

### New Timetable (December 2010)

The new timetable which seemed so long in coming has been with us a few weeks and already many passengers are noticing the difference!

The commuters travelling from Bury to Ipswich on a daily basis have been disappointed to experience that the 07.23 service, that was hitherto full to the gunwales by the time it reached Ipswich remains operated by a single carriage Class 153 unit and so the 'standing room only' scenario, especially from Needham Market, continues.

The introduction of the two carriage Class 170 units on most other Ipswich to Cambridge services has been very well received except, I am told, by cyclists who have little room in which to store their bicycles during the journey. Apparently it has been reluctantly agreed that they can be stored in the door vestibules which is far from ideal when being negotiated by other passengers.

The loss of the direct through services from Peterborough, via Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket, to London is sadly missed but was unfortunately the price we had to pay to improve the rolling stock on the Ipswich to Cambridge route. At least there was a plus side to losing the through services.

It is not yet clear how the timetables are settling down as the disruption caused by the prolonged bad weather may be masking other issues but we will continue to monitor this.

Overall I think the positive issues resulting from changes outweigh the negatives and we look forward to continued passenger growth on this line as hopefully the news of the 'new' trains spreads. (Ross Taylor)

### Change of Trains at Ipswich?

With the withdrawal of the through services from Bury St Edmunds to London anyone travelling to the metropolis from our line will have to change trains at either Ipswich or Stowmarket. With more flexibility of trains at Ipswich this is likely to be the preferred changing point. However, with the lift and new footbridge not likely to be open until April time at the earliest, there are still some real obstacles facing passengers who have to change platforms via the current footbridge and have heavy luggage, buggies etc. Additionally the waiting shelter near Platforms 1 and 2 has been closed whilst the new footbridge is completed. A temporary waiting room has been provided at the far end of platform 2 but this is not ideally

located for standard class passengers waiting for trains to London, nor is it at the right end of the station for the platforms that serve the branch lines.

Colleagues from East Suffolk Travellers Association (ESTA), who are suffering similarly following the withdrawal of the through trains from Lowestoft to London, have produced a questionnaire for passengers to complete to describe their journey experiences south of Ipswich following their change of train. Marpa would be pleased to hear of your similar experiences (good and bad) whilst travelling to London off the Bury line. Please get in touch with our Secretary, Ross Taylor, either by phone (01284 703308) or e-mail [secretary@marpa.org.uk](mailto:secretary@marpa.org.uk)

It is interesting that when talking to people who are travelling from Bury to London that the majority, it appears, prefer to travel via Cambridge and King's Cross. Is this your experience also? Is it because the service into King's Cross is faster? Is it because the fares are cheaper? If you know the answer please let us know.

### **Passenger Growth**

At a presentation to the December Railfuture meeting in Bury St Edmunds James Steward, from National Express East Anglia (NXEA), said that over the past year the number of passengers using Bury station had risen by around 11%. For Needham Market this was over 20% and as mentioned above it is expected that following the introduction of the new rolling stock onto our line, this increase is expected to continue. (Ross Taylor)

### **Dullingham Passenger Count**

On Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2010 members from Marpa and Railfuture East Anglia spent the day counting all passengers that both boarded and alighted from all trains that called at Dullingham. A total of 127 users used the station on the day and if averaged out across the year would total over 39,000. The potential for this station from surrounding villages is significant and it is known that many journeys are made by people driving up from Haverhill to commence their rail journeys. However, the rail service itself is poor with, amongst other things, a gap of four hours in the afternoon / early evening when no Cambridge bound train calls.

Marpa has been in touch with both Dullingham Parish Council and East Cambridgeshire District Council to arrange a meeting with National Express and our colleagues from Railfuture to see if the services that call at the station can be enhanced and what potential there is to improve the station facilities. (Ross Taylor)

### **Station Staffing**

Many surveys have been undertaken asking what factors passengers feel are important when planning or undertaking a rail journey. Time after time the message comes back that safety both on and off the train is a real issue. It is with this in mind that Marpa has continued to press for some stability and continuity in the whole staffing scenario at Bury St Edmunds.

As is mentioned, at least twice elsewhere within this Newsletter, the use of the station is increasing with further increases expected but it is often left unmanned for many hours.

I waited to meet my daughter off a train on a Thursday evening in mid December when no staff were on duty. On the platform there were a group of youths generally misbehaving and completely ignoring the smoking ban. The language was appalling (and I am no prude!) and this was clearly having an effect on other passengers who were arriving in good numbers following late night Christmas shopping.

I understand that the station staff would not reasonably be expected to 'police' the platforms but as a presence within the station they may have the influence to calm situations but if not at least they would be in a position to summon the local constabulary for assistance.

NXEA have told us that they have had some problems with staffing and things have not been resolved as quickly as they would like but they promise things will get better. This is good news but the replacement staff must be in place soon and every day waiting is one too many. (Ross Taylor)

### **Marpa AGM – Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2011**

The Marpa AGM is once again being held in the Friends Meeting House at 2.15 p.m. on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2011. We are pleased to say that our speaker will be Alan Trett the local NXEA manager who covers the stations between Ipswich and Cambridge. Alan also looks after Diss on the main Norwich to London route as well as Stowmarket. Please come along and listen to what Alan has to say about our line(s) currently and what can be done to enhance the services and facilities along it.

You will find a 'flyer' for the AGM attached and if you know of somewhere it can be displayed then please do so. Alan is giving up his time to come and talk to us so a good turn out would be appreciated. Thanks. (Ross Taylor)

### **Ticketing**

As has been mentioned many times before the whole structure of ticketing when travelling by rail is inconsistent and quite frankly at times laughable!

I was travelling into Cambridge a week or so ago at peak time and a gentleman got on at Kennett and asked the conductor for a return to Newmarket and then asked for a return to London from Newmarket. I couldn't at the time understand why he was doing this and, not wishing to be completely intrusive, I did not hear the cost of these two tickets. However, I enquired at Bury how much a ticket to Newmarket and then a return to London from there would cost. It transpired that if I bought my tickets this way it would cost about half of the cost of buying a ticket to London from Bury. The clerk at Bury said that it was inconsistent but always sold the cheapest fare to customers for the journey from Bury to London. He did add that if he was asked to provide two separate tickets he would do so, as it was a legitimate way to purchase them. The standard cheapest peak ticket from Bury is now over £70!

Does this make sense to you?.....me neither!! (Ross Taylor)

### **Station to Station Walks**

Please do not forget to look out for the various walks between the stations on our line. Marpa member Roger Wolfe has researched and drawn the maps etc which are available to download from our website.

The walk from Elmswell to Thurston is one of 75 featured in the Ramblers Association 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary publication 'Best Walks in Britain'. Why not try one?

### **Marpa Membership**

The membership of Marpa is from 1<sup>st</sup> August to 31<sup>st</sup> July each year. Currently Marpa does not have the IT capability to send reminders to each and every member when the subscriptions are due other than to issue reminders in this Newsletter. Your membership is valued by us and the subscription is vital if we are to continue to campaign in support of issues that members feel strongly about in relation to our local rail routes etc.

If you are receiving this Newsletter and haven't yet renewed your subscription, or you cannot remember whether you have(!), for 2010 / 2011 can we urge you to get in touch with our Membership Secretary (Ann Henderson 01359 230139), c/o 48 High Street, Ixworth, Bury St Edmunds, IP31 2HJ, as soon as you can?

It costs money to distribute the Newsletter and, as Marpa is not flush with funds, we will in future only circulate to fully 'paid up' members. We hope that you will understand.

# Marpa

Mid Anglia Rail Passengers' Association

Notice of

# Annual General Meeting

In the Meeting Room  
at Friends Meeting House, St John's Street, Bury St  
Edmunds, IP33 1SJ

**on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2011  
at 2.15 p.m.**

Guest Speaker;

**Alan Trett**, Area Manager, National Express East  
Anglia.

Alan's responsibility covers all stations between  
Ipswich and Cambridge

*"Come along and find out what is happening with rail and  
connected bus services in your area"*