

Marpa

Mid Anglia Rail Passengers' Association
www.marpa.org.uk

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Summer 2011 Newsletter

Welcome to the Summer 2011 newsletter. I received several responses to items in the last newsletter, in particular David Goodchild took time to respond as to why passengers prefer to go to London via Cambridge. Several points I had not previously considered are significantly more connections per hour to London at Cambridge and of course Kings Cross now has international connections as well as better underground connections to the west end and Heathrow Airport. David also reminded me that the journey time can be shorter, even if the trains are a bit noisier.

Farewell – it is with sadness that we report the death of Sir Graham Macmillan who was a member of the Rail Users Consultative Council (RUCC) at the time MISTA (the former name of our organisation) was formed and was a source of great support and encouragement to us in our early years. We also note the passing of J C Baker, a Marpa member, who was a nationally respected railway historian and photographer and who was one of MISTA's first members. He was on our membership list for many years. We say farewell and note with much appreciation their help and support over the years.

Refurbishment of Bury Station – I was told very recently that the monies to undertake the £165,000 refurbishment of the station have finally been released by the NXEA Management Board for all works to be completed by 31 December 2011. This is indeed good news. As I understand it the toilets and waiting room on Platform 2 will receive a significant enhancement. The toilets sadly could not be re-located down to entrance hall level as there were problems with the drains so they must stay 'up top'. The Entrance Hall will see the removal of the old parcels office so the area will be opened up and additional seating provided. The whole area, as well as the subway and stairs to the platforms, will be re-painted. Hopefully the platform lights will be cleaned also? (Ross Taylor)

Booking Office – At the time of the release of the monies mentioned above the NXEA Board also authorised the additional staff required to provide an adequate presence within the booking office at Bury. This has been a real issue for many months now and it is pleasing that matters may soon be resolved. It goes without saying that we hope that these additional resources will also assist with the cleanliness of the station which has really suffered of late. (Ross Taylor)

Strengthened Service – It was pleasing to note that the 06.56 Ipswich to Cambridge service (07.32 from Bury) has been strengthened to a three car train to cope with the demand. This is a very popular train for commuters and school students alike and is always busy. The seats available to passengers was effectively reduced upon the introduction of the two car Class 170 units as they do not have as many seats as the Class 156s they replaced. Hopefully now most people will be able to sit down? (Ross Taylor)

Marpa / Gipping Valley Walks – Marpa has moved forward following its close co-operation with Roger Wolfe and the Ramblers Association and now joined forces with the River Gipping Trust to further advertise Marpa Walks 1 and 2 which closely follow the path of the river. To move things forward an initial print run has taken place, funded by the River Gipping Trust, to produce leaflets 1 and 2 and these two walks will be subject to a guided walk led by Roger Wolfe on Saturday 24th September (Ipswich to Needham Market 11.5 miles) and Saturday 1st October (Needham Market to Stowmarket 4.5 miles). Both of these walks are designed to tell you about the history of the river and the Stowmarket navigation so expect a leisurely stroll rather than a route march. If you are interested in either walk then please contact Roger before the day(s) of the walk on 01473 726649

Thurston to Bury Walk - In addition to the walks mentioned above Roger will again lead the Thurston to Bury walk on Saturday 26th November which coincides with the increasingly popular and award winning Bury Fayre which takes place for three days over this particular weekend.

Passenger Count at Newmarket – Marpa, in conjunction with our colleagues at Railfuture, intend to hold another station passenger count at Newmarket on 29th September. We undertook a count a couple of years ago and it is our intention to see how things have changed in that time especially now that we have better rolling stock on the line. If you are able to help with the count then we would be delighted to hear from you. Please contact the Secretary on 01284 703308 or e-mail secretary@marpa.org.uk

Marpa AGM – On 12th March we had a very useful meeting to which many members were able to attend. Additionally many non members were in attendance which enhanced the proceedings. Alan Trett, the Area Manager from NXEA, spoke about his career, his current role and his aspirations for our lines. You can view the minutes of the meeting via our website www.marpa.org.uk. Alan Trett mentioned at our AGM that there continues to be an increase in the number of passengers using most of the stations along our line (2010 figures). This does not reflect the national trend which overall shows a slight decrease. Comparing the 2009 figures with the latest 2010 figures there was a significant increase at Needham Market (9.1%). Comparing the 2010 figures with those from 2007 there were increases at Elmswell (39.9%) Needham Market (36.1%) and Bury (34.4%) with healthy increases at most other stations. (Ross Taylor)

New Franchise – Marpa has met two of the preferred bidders for the new, but shorter, franchise for this area and discussed with them our aspirations for the future. The new franchise starts in February next year and is likely to last about 15 months with, I understand, a possible 12 month extension. There will then follow a much longer, possibly 15 year, franchise. Our aspirations include an hourly service from Ipswich to Peterborough, tangible improvements at Bury and Newmarket stations and flexibility to strengthen services during special events. (Ross Taylor)

Community Rail Partnership (CRP) - Marpa is committed to link with all partners who, like us, want to promote rail services and facilities along our lines. We are a little envious of our friends and colleagues along the East Suffolk Line, who are currently part of a CRP, and we want to see what we can do to achieve something similar. We were put off somewhat the last time we ventured down this route by folk who told us that because of the amount of freight that uses our line we did not satisfy the criteria for a CRP. That was then and this is now and so we are trying again. We have so far approached Suffolk County Council and NXEA in this regard and from here we will be energetic in trying to get our share of any funding available to be spent on our line. (Ross Taylor)

Marpa Membership

The membership of Marpa is from 1st August to 31st 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.

Please renew your 2011 / 2012 subscription by getting in touch with our Membership Secretary (Ann Henderson 01359 230139). Her address is:-

MARPA (Membership)
c/o 48 High Street,
Ixworth,
Bury St Edmunds,
IP31 2HJ

..and finally..

Going the Wrong Way? – As usual at just after 17.00 on a weekday in the middle of June two Class 170 units were sitting on Platform 4 at Ipswich awaiting their passengers to take them home after a busy day at the office. The 17.13 to Lowestoft was at Platform 4C whilst the 17.19 to Cambridge was at 4B. Both units were due to head north. I was now on the 17.19 awaiting departure. Nothing unusual about any of this and, in accordance with normal practice, the Conductor announced the departure with the usual calling points.

It was therefore somewhat of a surprise to all when the platform whistle blew and we proceeded to move off.....but heading south for Ipswich tunnel! There was no announcement as we entered the darkness of the tunnel and we just kept going. It was at this stage that passengers became a little concerned and those expecting to have tea in Needham Market were planning instead to have it in Manningtree!

All was revealed as we emerged into the sunshine at the southern end of the tunnel and ground to a halt. A crackly voice over the public address system helpfully told us that we had left the station in the wrong direction! This we obviously already knew....but why? Well apparently it was because the unit forming the 17.13 service to Lowestoft had failed and this was the only way to facilitate our exit from the platform and to proceed north by running through Platform 3. When I subsequently spoke to the Conductor he told me that he could not make an announcement as he was watching the train leave the platform as he had to. I understood this but as he was standing next to the driver, who was obviously not in the normal cab at this time, why could he not make the announcement? A shrug of the shoulders perhaps says more than words.

On and off I have commuted between Bury and Ipswich since 1975 and we have never done that before!! (Ross Taylor)

WEB SITE REMINDER

A further reminder to visit/use our website www.marpa.org.uk