

# Marpa

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

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## Winter 2012 Newsletter

The autumn is now here with some beautiful misty mornings and low sunshine streaming in through the carriage windows. Summer seemed fairly short but the predicted meltdown of the transport system did not happen, I believe the railway network coped well with the Olympic and Paralympic games, certainly I was unaware of any complaints and as I used Ipswich station I was well aware of the customer help points and the 'dressing' of the station in flags and bunting to add to the cheerful atmosphere.

I have been commuting to Ipswich by rail on average 3 days a week and it does work reasonably well for me. The Class 170 units in an evening have been gloriously cool on the hot days, and the service has been cancelled only once (the A14 has had 1 major incident in the same period – so in my score keeping it is 1-1 on which is more reliable). My main bugbear is the stock for my morning train from Elmswell. This is still a single coach 153 unit, which is tight for spare seats at Elmswell and inevitably has standing customers from Stowmarket. There are many 'professional' passengers on the train, laptops and files out over the tables using commuting time to work – one theoretical advantage of train over the car, but as the train fills there is less room for them to spread and this adds to the cramped atmosphere on the train. The train one hour earlier is a 2 car unit – the logic will no doubt be buried deep in operating diagrams but as a customer service it is poor. We can only hope for improvement in the next timetable change.

I have also been contacted by a potential customer in his 80s who found the cheapest advertised tickets were only available on line – and he did not possess the technology, nor the ability to purchase these using the internet – I tried and failed to help him as we both found that it is impossible to contact Greater Anglia by phone to buy a discounted ticket – at least I couldn't find any phone number on their website (which to be fair I suppose the logic is if you are using a website you are comfortable with the technology) but where else do we go to find this sort of information nowadays. My subsequent research has found that it is possible to book by phone at East Coast Trains (also my personal favourite ticket buying website)

### **Appeal for new committee members**

MARPA is as good as it's membership and their active involvement. You do not need to know your class 153 from your class 170s but a desire to put the MARPA message across to the rail industry management is useful. We meet on one Saturday morning every other month, so it is not a major time commitment. We do welcome new members with new ideas.

In the light of the above we ask each member to see if they can recruit a member. It is easy to ask as our membership fees are so low – not much more than a pint of beer at a posh hostelry.

## **Fare Rises**

In the New Year fares will rise. David Sidebottom, from the pressure group Passenger Focus, said: "We are disappointed by the news that in January fares in England are set to go up on average by 6.2% – for hard-pressed passengers, especially those who rely on the train for work, the prospect of another increase is a worrying one. Passengers in Great Britain already pay some of the highest fares in Europe and our most recent passenger survey showed that just 42% of passengers felt they had got value for money on their ticket.

"Having some fares regulated is clearly in passengers' interests. However, the way that train companies are allowed flexibility to set fares on individual routes is deeply unfair. If the fares go up by RPI plus three percent, many passengers, already hard-pressed, could be looking at double digit fare increases. While we understand the need for flexibility, we strongly believe that this system needs to be changed."

## **Dullingham stoppers**

MARPA continue to press for more trains to stop at Dullingham as we believe this station has the potential to be a 'park and ride' type railhead for the Haverhill area.

## **A good news Story!**

A major improvement in customer service has been the introduction of the Saturday timetable on bank holidays. We don't know if this was a trial or a permanent change, but the improvement in the service is most welcome.

## **Gamekeeper turns poacher**

Our last secretary, Ross Taylor has now taken up a part time job with Greater Anglia at Bury station. Whilst he has had to resign from the MARPA committee we are pleased he is putting his railway knowledge to commercial use. MARPA's loss is Greater Anglia's gain, we just wish we could have sold him like a footballer!

## **Radio Suffolk interview at Newmarket**

MARPA's chairman, John Drake has been interviewed at Newmarket station for BBC Radio Suffolk, unfortunately we never knew when it was broadcast so we don't know what a star he was. One piece of good news for Newmarket is that the extended platform is in use for 3 car trains

## **Snoasis update**

Media reports are that the SNOASIS development is set to proceed – and a station at Great Blakenham/Claydon is one of the items high on the developer's 'to do' list.

## **BETTER WEEKEND SERVICES FOR PASSENGERS IN 2013**

MARPA have received a news release from Greater Anglia, which is great news for those travelling beyond the extremes of our line. Passengers travelling on the Great Eastern main line are set to benefit from better weekend rail services in 2013. Network Rail and Greater Anglia have together agreed to reduce the amount of planned disruptive engineering work and need for bus replacement services this Christmas and at weekends in 2013.

For the first time in many years, there will only be minor disruption during the Christmas and New Year period, with no complete line closures, enabling passengers to make uninterrupted journeys over the festive holiday. Under the new improvement works schedule for 2013, only two Saturdays on the main line are affected by any bus journeys, and there are no bus replacements from the end of March until early October.

The decision is the result of an alliance between Network Rail and Greater Anglia to provide an improved train service and achieve a better balance between delivering infrastructure improvements and minimising disruption to passengers.

Since 2007, there have been on average 30 weekends a year requiring bus replacement services. In 2013, there will only be 7 planned weekends of such disruptive engineering work.

Essential overnight work will still take place on other weekends, meaning that some very late night Saturday, early Sunday morning and very late Sunday journeys may involve buses, but any disruption to passengers will be limited. As well as the overhead line upgrade, Network Rail will also be carrying out essential track renewal and freight upgrades to take lorries off the road.

There will be three weekends where main line and metro services will terminate at Stratford because of track renewal and Crossrail work, outside Liverpool Street. This will not involve buses - passengers can continue their journeys using London Underground services between Liverpool Street and Stratford.

Ahead of next year's changes, Network Rail will be upgrading overhead line equipment between Shenfield and Chelmsford every weekend from September 15/16 to November 24/25 and on late weekday nights on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesdays from September 17 to October 17.

### **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.

Please renew your 2012 / 2013 subscription by getting in touch with our Membership Secretary (Ann Henderson 01359 230139). Her address is:-

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### **WEB SITE REMINDER**

A further reminder to visit/use our website [www.marpa.org.uk](http://www.marpa.org.uk)