

# Marpa

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

Published by MARPA  
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## Spring and Summer 2014 Newsletter

Thank you to those who responded to the last newsletter, I enjoy receiving and reading any feedback – and thanks to those who attached articles of interest.

Spring is the time for the MARPA AGM – which this year will be held in Bury St Edmunds on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> April – please see the later item in this newsletter.

I thought it time to remind readers of quite what MARPA exists for. There is a feeling that a Rail User Group grows in strength when a line is threatened or the service is really dire, neither of which applies but we do think our the service can be better – there is always room for improvement.

### ***Our Day-to-Day Objectives***

- ≡ To respond to rail and other groups requesting information on local services in which we have an interest.
- ≡ To provide feedback to the train operator on performance and other related issues.
- ≡ To provide members with a regular (at least bi-annual) newsletter dealing with current issues.
- ≡ To interact with all relevant groups to campaign and canvass for the protection of local services
- ≡ To capture, in any relevant way, local public opinion on what is wanted from their local rail services.

### ***Strategic Objectives***

To campaign for:-

- ≡ An hourly service between Ipswich and Peterborough and to maintain the current hourly frequency between Ipswich & Cambridge.
- ≡ A frequent stopping train pattern at the "villages".
- ≡ Secure and suitable station accommodation and surroundings.
- ≡ Well signposted bus/rail interchanges, at relevant stations, with suitable waiting facilities, timetable and train running information at all stations.

### ***In addition, we will.....***

Explore with other groups the possibility of creating a community rail partnership for our local lines

Current issues for MARPA include the calling pattern of services at Dullingham Station, the availability of a public telephone at Newmarket Station and the timing of the morning services for schoolchildren in mid Suffolk.

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

MARPA really does need some more committee members – there are lots of jobs to go round and not enough willing hands to do them. The jobs are not onerous – they just mount up if you have to do two or three of them. Committee meetings are approximately every other month on a Saturday morning – tea and biscuits provided. Meetings are usually in Elmswell and I can't understand why we are not inundated with volunteers!

### **AGM**

The AGM takes place at 2.00 in the Friends Meeting House in St Johns Street Bury St Edmunds on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> April. Please do come and meet other people with an interest in our line. Refreshments will be available.

There will be a talk from James Steward, Greater Anglia's Station Manager for our line.

**The following 2 articles are taken from Railfuture's RailAction magazine.** MARPA is affiliated to Railfuture which acts as an umbrella organisation for local rail user groups.

### **Norwich in Ninety task force set up**

Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne has announced the establishment of a task force of Department for Transport and Network Rail officials to meet with local MPs to examine ways of improving services for passengers along the East Anglian main line and measures to reduce travel times with the aim of a 90-minute journey between London and Norwich. He made his announcement in a speech to Norwich Chamber of Commerce on 7 November 2013.

Rail campaigners in the area now have another reason for being in contact with their MPs.

### **Thameslink Southern and Great Northern franchise bidding**

The TSGN franchising process was paused in October 2012 with the bidders at that time being Abellio, First Group, Govia, MTR and Stagecoach. A new invitation to tender was launched, also on 26 September 2013, with the successful bid to be announced in May 2014. The Thameslink and Great Northern elements of the franchise, together with some current Southeastern services, will start in September 2014, while the Southern services will be included in July 2015. The franchise will be for seven years and, unlike others, will operate on a management basis because of the revenue uncertainty during the completion of the Thameslink enhancement project. When fully operating, TSGN will be the largest franchise in terms of trains and passengers carried. Railfuture's response to the consultation when the franchise was being developed can be seen on the submissions pages of their website.

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/thameslink-southern-and-great-northern-2013-invitation-to-tender](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/thameslink-southern-and-great-northern-2013-invitation-to-tender)

## **School Trains to Thurston and Bury St Edmunds**

My involvement with MARPA came about due to the big timetable changes of 2004 – ten years ago we were given the hourly service and on balance service improvements to our route – but we lost direct trains to London and the morning service from the villages between Stowmarket and Bury to Peterborough. My children used to attend school in Bury and after the timetable changes were always recorded as 'late' as their train was retimed to get them to Bury 5 minutes late. A source of annoyance to them and the school who sent me letters effectively asking me to get them to school earlier – I could send them on the earlier train but that was oddly, about an hour and 15 minutes earlier.

When MARPA received an e-mail from a lady who signs herself as a 'fed up mother of a young rail user' the complaints sounded very familiar but the train times work better for Thurston, the actual issues are slightly different. The email states the issues very succinctly.

*'It's my son that uses this line every day to go to school and back 8.35am and 4.35pm, you wouldn't think travelling less than 10 miles would be so troublesome!*

*Main problem is overcrowding and not enough carriages. He has only been using the train since Sept 2013 and I am now thinking perhaps we may have to find another way of getting between Stowmarket and Thurston.*

*On more than a couple of occasions over the last 5 months he has not been able to get on the train travelling at either time as there is no room and most days they are packed in worse than battery hens in a cage (probably battery hens now have more room as they have regulations)!*

*Currently they are only running with ONE carriage, two is never enough, this week (early February) has been a nightmare for the passengers.*

*I rang Greater Anglia to find out what was going on the answer was "yes one carriage on certain routes for a while as the diesel stock that runs on this line are in for repairs and he couldn't say when things would improve " if you call improvement still overcrowding on two carriages.*

*Has this line always been so problematic?*

*Come Sept this year the school takes on 2 more year groups that's more children hoping to use the train, no one is ever going to get on unless serious improvements are made.*

*What's the point in me paying £150 a term or more for a service that's not a service.'*

So come on Greater Anglia, schoolchildren are the future – don't ignore them, get them used to thinking 'train' when it comes to a transport choice. My solution is to stop the 8.30 train from Stowmarket to Peterborough at the next two village stations, giving a relief to the overcrowded train and allowing through travel to Peterborough again.

## **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 2013 / 2014 subscription by getting in touch with our Membership Secretary (Ann Henderson 01359 230139). Her address is:-

MARPA (Membership)  
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## **WEB SITE REMINDER**

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

## **Photographs**

I'm thinking of putting a photograph of a train on our route in the newsletter. Anyone wishing to submit one please e-mail it to me. Due to the size of the newsletter the file does not have to be very large –

The following photograph of the 1543 Cambridge - Ipswich (on the right) being passed by the 1516 Ipswich - Cambridge (on the left) at Dullingham. Committee member (and Station Adopter Newmarket) Ben Walsh is the photographer

