

Marpa

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

Published by MARPA
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Spring 2020 Newsletter

Dear MARPA member.

What an autumn/winter. The excitement over the new trains quickly dissipated as the service fell apart over signalling problems. There was no doubt that a serious incident occurred at a level crossing in Norfolk, whether that was the reason for the service issues is not clear but the resulting 'signalling' issue chaos that resulted led to a really bad time for Greater Anglia passengers on rural routes, our line was badly affected and the Ipswich – Peterborough route was publicised as effectively suspended and replaced by buses.

So what did, indeed what could, MARPA do? Apart from flagging up the issues to do with the transfer of the old units away from the region before the new ones were 'bedded in', not a lot. We gave impartial answers and information to anyone from local government or press asking for a view and we met with Greater Anglia management to add our voice to the disquiet over the reasons for the chaos.

You might be surprised to see a small photograph of a steam locomotive in this newsletter. You might ask why as we are about the future of the Cambridge – Ipswich route. I am aware that we do have members who are interested in the history of railways and they will hopefully find the article interesting. There is an aspiration to build a completely new replica of a B17 locomotive. It might be being built in Wales for many good reasons, but the type of locomotive is historically grounded in the Ipswich to Cambridge route.

AGM

The AGM will be held in the Meeting Room at Friends' Meeting House, St John's Street, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 1SJ

on Saturday 4th April 2020 at 2.00 p.m.

Guest Speakers: Phil Smart of Railfuture and Charles Baker Public Affairs Manager Network Rail Anglia

IF YOU NEED A MAP TO FIND THE VENUE PLEASE LET ME KNOW AND I WILL SEND ONE.

THE RE-CREATION OF AN ICONIC EAST ANGLIAN B17 STEAM LOCOMOTIVE TO BE KNOWN AS 61673 SPIRIT OF SANDRINGHAM

[The B17 Steam Locomotive Trust (Spirit of Sandringham) is not associated with The Sandringham Estate]

The B17 Steam Locomotive Trust (B17 SLT) is building a new LNER class B17 passenger locomotive for use on the national network and at railway heritage centres.

The B17 locomotives were specifically designed for East Anglia by Sir Nigel Gresley (of Mallard and Flying Scotsman fame). Seventy-three B17s were built and all were named after country houses, football clubs and county regiments associated with the routes of the LNER. They were introduced into service late in 1928 and all were scrapped by August 1960. Of the total of 73 locomotives, 61 of them were based at either Cambridge or Ipswich during part of their working lives.

One of them, 61619, Welbeck Abbey, was actually stationed at Bury St. Edmunds for a period during its lifetime. Two locomotives were also kept in good order at Cambridge for royal train duties with trains to and from Wolferton, for the Sandringham Estate. Sadly, two of the class were used on the funeral trains for both King George V and King George VI.

These locomotives became operational between Ipswich, Bury St. Edmunds and Cambridge. From the early months of 1929 they hauled the heavy boat trains from Parkeston, through March and onto Manchester and Liverpool. Throughout their working lives they were a common sight, either on the boat trains, or on London to Ipswich and Cambridge services.

Of all the locomotives based on the line, probably the most famous was 2845. This was named "The Suffolk Regiment" in ceremonies at both Ipswich and Bury St. Edmunds on June 22 1935 when it entered service. The nameplates were unveiled by the Colonel of the regiment, General Sir John Ponsonby. The ceremonies were attended by LNER senior management, including Sir Nigel Gresley.

As re-numbered 61645, it was used at least twice to haul troop trains for the regiment when returning from overseas assignments. Once was in July 1947 when 2nd battalion returned from India, and again in 1953, when the 1st battalion returned from Malaya. It was also used to haul a special train for staff of the East Anglian Daily Times to visit the Festival of Britain.



61619 "Welbeck Abbey"
departing Bury St. Edmunds in
August 1951, with an express to
Ely
Photo: B17 SLT



If anyone has any knowledge, or photographs, of B17 locomotives on these routes, or would like to help in the re-creation of this East Anglian iconic design, then please contact the Trust by:-

Email at b17enquiries@gmail.com.

Telephone 07527 670436

Letter to B17 SLT, c/o 171 Clifton Road, Shefford, Beds. SG17 5AG

For more information about our charitable trust please visit the website at

www.b17steamloco.com

MID ANGLIA ROUTE STATION USAGE ESTIMATES 2014 – 2019

(As published by Office of Rail & Road 14/01/20)

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH

Station	2014	2018	2019	% change 2019 to:	
				2014	2018
Needham Market	91,358	100,648	102,320	12.0	1.7
Stowmarket	944,466	935,244	967,114	2.4	3.4
Elmswell	80,558	68,546	71,078	-11.8	3.7
Thurston	70,500	72,388	77,592	10.1	7.2
Bury St. Edmunds	578,016	652,084	665,112	15.1	2.0
Kennett	30,992	39,512	42,684	37.7	8.0
Newmarket	285,066	358,798	355,068	24.6	-1.0
Dullingham	36,536	39,028	41,832	14.5	7.2
ALL EAST ANGLIA				21.8	3.1

The ORR data published in January 2020 reflects an encouraging picture regarding passenger numbers on the Mid Anglia (Cambridge – Ipswich) service. The full dataset plus methodology is here:

<http://orr.gov.uk/statistics/published-stats/station-usage-estimates>

Over the five years 2014 – 2019, allowing for occasional annual falls at some stations, the overall trend in terms of passenger numbers on the Mid Anglia line has been upwards. The entry of Needham Market in 2018 to the “six figure club” has been sustained since, and significant year on year increases in footfall at Thurston, Dullingham & Kennett – over 7% in each case – are worth noting. The evidence for incorporating an hourly stop at each of the latter stations in any future timetable re-write, with growth in passenger numbers running at more than twice the regional average, becomes increasingly strong.

The stand-out statistical curiosity in the line data is the story of Elmswell – just why has it lost approximately 10,000 passengers since 2014, the only station to buck the generally upward trend?

The data for 2020 will almost certainly reflect the impact of the cancellations and late running that afflicted the route, along with the rest of the “regional” railway network operated by Greater Anglia, at the end of 2019 and the first weeks of 2020. We can only hope that the impressive new train fleet will quickly recover from initial glitches, prove its reliability and help Greater Anglia restore its reputation for running an efficient rail service.

New Trains

A long time member who does not live in East Anglia recently sent me his comments on a first experience of the Class 755.

‘I have just had my first trip on one of the new GA coaches between PBO and BSE. All I can say is: What a difference, and Goodness me! It was a Thursday afternoon, so few passengers. Longer train, nice big seats, airy carriages, huge windows, big tables, excellent wifi. Now they’re here, they are just superb. I hope I’m not stuck in old coaching stock and cancellations on my return journey tomorrow!’

And it was the same on the way back (BSE-PBO): nice bright, airy, & spacious; power points and wifi: I had a very productive hour of post-meeting paperwork & computer work between Bury and Peterborough. And to boot that was on the day (Fri 10 Jan) of the bridge bash at Kennett/Saxham which closed the line from about 7.30am to 4.30pm (luckily I was booked out of Bury on the 16:29 and it ran to time!).’

It was great to receive positive feedback; it is also nice to hear from members on a subject other than a complaint!

Meetings with Greater Anglia Management

MARPA committee members hold meetings at least twice yearly with Greater Anglia's management. We held such a meeting on 3rd February in Newmarket and the opportunity was taken to express our views on:-

- Engineering bus replacement services to Elmswell and Kennett. This is a Network Rail issue as they provided information to Greater Anglia which was inaccurate and caused Elmswell and Kennett to have no service during engineering work blockage of the line. After MARPA and Elmswell Parish Council made strong representations to Greater Anglia the February blockade was handled much better and replacement buses ran via revised bus stops.
- The Performance of the route generally. It is no surprise that Greater Anglia are well aware of the feelings of many passengers that the service has been dire over the early winter period and is not perfect as we come towards Spring. MARPA made strong representations that the service was simply not good enough and communication poor.
- Late running trains terminated at Bury St Edmunds. Although very annoying for those with disrupted journeys, the turning back of trains at Bury is sometimes required to rebuild the timetable after a period of disruption and to avoid total cancellations.

STOP PRESS – ACCESS FOR ALL AT NEEDHAM MARKET

MARPA members have been involved in the Needham Market 'Access of all' campaign and on 26th February Greater Anglia issued the following press release:-:

Greater Anglia has been successful in its bids for funding to help improve access at two Suffolk rail stations. The company has secured Access for All funding - a Government funding programme for schemes to improve station access - for Needham Market and Bury St Edmunds stations.

This means that Needham Market will finally receive an upgrade to improve access to the Ipswich-bound platform 2 at the station after a long campaign locally.

The application was part of a coordinated partnership approach between Greater Anglia, Suffolk County Council, Mid Suffolk District Council and the Needham Market Group.

At Bury St Edmunds, the funding means that a new accessible entrance can be built on the north side of the station, linking the newly-built car park with the station concourse. This bid was supported by West Suffolk Council, Bury St Edmunds Town Trust and other local organisations.

Simone Bailey, Greater Anglia's Asset Management Director, said: "We are absolutely delighted to hear that our proactive funding bids for Bury St Edmunds and Needham Market stations have been successful, enabling us to make rail travel more accessible at these stations.

"We are very grateful to our partner organisations who worked with us to get this fantastic result for stations in Suffolk.

"Along with the enhanced accessibility features of our new fleet of trains, this funding means that we are really starting to transform rail travel for people with disabilities and other accessibility needs, making it much easier for them to travel."

MARPA Membership

The membership of MARPA is from 1st January to 31st December each year. If you have **NOT** renewed for the year 2020 please do so now! 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.

Annual Membership Subscription Rates:

Adult - £5.00

Family/Joint - £6.00

Concession - £4.00

(Student / Senior / Unwaged / Disabled)

Please renew your 2018 subscription by getting in touch with our Membership Secretary (Peter Rutt 01359 242464). His address is:-

MARPA (Membership)

c/o Well House, The Street, Elmswell, Bury St Edmunds, IP30 9BS

Please make your cheque payable to 'Mid Anglia Rail Passengers Association'.

WEB SITE REMINDER

Please visit/use our website www.marpa.org.uk



Photo by Ben Walsh