

Newsletter

Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways

Number 70

June 2009

RE-UNITE OUR CITY!!!

(From the 'Mouth to The Gate!)

On 10 June **last year**, FOSBR member Eric Wildman submitted a statement urging Bristol City Councillors to re-unite the North and South of our city by making use of existing railway infrastructure. His proposal was simple - to take whatever action is necessary to extend Severn Beach line and certain other local services to a re-opened station at Ashton Gate.

Eric explained how BCC's three year investment in an improved service on the Severn Beach line could easily be extended to develop links south of the river. Such a re-opening would also, of course, be an important step to laying the foundations for a full re-opening to Portishead, the Holy Grail for Bristol's rail network.

100,000 Car Journeys!

Action is even more necessary with the advent of the new Bristol City stadium, whose 45,000 seats it is estimated will produce an additional 100,000 car journeys per year. With a new, large Tesco store, massive new housing proposals nearby and the many events held at the Ashton Gate estate, re-opening of Ashton Gate station really should be a no-brainer!

Bristol City Council needs to ensure that developers accept "106" agreements and contribute to rail investment as part of their proposed developments.

Their response to our FOSBR member's letter to date:

SILENCE!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY - TRAIN SERVICE!

Dateline: Sunday 17 May 2009, Shirehampton Railway Station

The bleak greyness of Sunday 17th May was broken by the arrival of the 14.44 train to Avonmouth, from which detrained almost 50 people, amongst whom were councillors, FoSBR campaigners and Cat Hobbs (down from London specially to be with us).

There was some singing of the FoSBR railway songs, followed by speeches from Cat, Councillors and prospective candidates for Westminster, all in celebration of the great success of the new train service subsidised by Bristol City Council one year ago.

Passenger figures are up by around 40% and there is now a regular Sunday service, the first for over 40 years.

Cat reminded us of some of the battles, councillors were wholesome in their praise (from all parties) of its success; Bernard Kennedy of ASLEF reminded us of the future e.g. electrification, relaying track on the Beach line and up the Horfield bank, as well as Henbury.

We all then enjoyed a piece of cake which was specially made in the shape of a train. (see web site).

Whilst we waited for the 15.55 back we chatted and crammed into the shelter to avoid the rain.

What next for FoSBR? Keeping the ground gained, redoubling from Montpelier to Clifton (for a half hour service), P&R platform at Portway, the Portishead line not much then!!

Getting around Bristol by electric tram was easy way back in 1895, when Bristol had a visionary, dynamic transport culture.

The trams ran 17 different routes to serve the residents of Old Market, Kingswood, Hanham, Staple Hill, Bedminster, Brislington, Horfield and Westbury-on-Trym. At the height of its success, Bristol Tramways had a fleet of **237** trams and four depots.

Peter Davey's slide shows of these days are enormously popular and his bookings run to 5 a month.

Peter has kindly agreed to make his talk especially for **FOSBR** on **Saturday 10th October** at 7pm at The Village Hall, Ableton Lane, Severn Beach.

Not only are we in for a treat, Peter's talk will make the past inspire the present.

**CHEAP PEAK LONDON FARES!
WELL DONE FGW!!**

News reaches us that in the last few weeks it has become possible to book advance tickets for travel on FGW services during peak times, at very reasonable prices. For instance if you want to travel between Bristol and London before 9am or between London and Bristol in the evening peak (4pm-7pm) it is now possible, providing you book well enough in advance, to get tickets for **£21 single**.

It's even possible to travel on the 04:47 from Bristol-London Paddington for just **£10 single** if you book far enough ahead.

This is a huge improvement on the situation which was in place for many many years, whereby if you wished to travel at peak times between these two destinations (or any long(ish) distance along the GW main line), no cheap advance tickets were available at all.

Transport in the South West - MPs call for evidence - FOSBR provides the answers!

In response to the question whether transport provision in the South West is adequate to meet the demands placed on the region, the answer is decidedly **NO**. In reply to the same question relating to the Greater Bristol area the answer is **NO** once again.

All we are getting is more road building and a Rapid Transit Bus system that at times will have to share our road network. The roads and motorways around our region are at saturation point.

The priorities for improvement should be – to invest in local railways; double up single railway tracks; re-open closed railway stations; build new railway platforms; re-open the Portishead line to passengers; invest in the Bristol Metro.

The South West RFA2 bids have been prioritised wrongly. Instead of the railway bids being put to the back of the queue, they should be fast tracked to the front!

The region is not doing nearly enough to promote environmentally friendly transport.

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In fact, quite the opposite is happening. By building more roads we are simply encouraging more people to use them.

For example, Bristol City Council was involved in building a Park and Ride at the A4 Portway, Bristol next to the Severn Beach rail line – but **without** a railway platform. This park and ride is a failure - lots of money spent on it at best only half full.

This is the same line which Bristol City Council has invested in since May 2008 and hired an additional train for a more frequent train service which has resulted in an 40% increase in passengers. A new platform and a thirty minute rail service would allow motorists a much faster route to Bristol Temple Meads and connecting services to destinations such as Bath, Cardiff, Reading, London and beyond.

This is just one example of Bristol's underused railway network. We are delighted that South West MPs are listening to us.

Investing in an efficient rail system will create jobs, improve public transport options, reduce congestion, improve air quality and will regenerate the economy. We urge you to and call for this investment immediately.

David Wood

Rail & Maritime Transport Union
Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways

John's Hairdresser

Monday – Thursday 7am – 4pm
Friday 7am – 5pm Saturday 7am – noon

On the platform at Avonmouth Station!
Gloucester Road, Avonmouth

Estd. 1967

Tel: 07966 475237

ANDELS CAFE

**Opp. Avonmouth Station
Gloucester Road, Avonmouth**

Good Cheap Breakfasts & Lunches

**Monday – Friday 7am – 1.45pm
Saturday 7am – 11am**

FOSBR to support RMT Rail Union Campaign

Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways will propose at their July meeting to "support the RMT rail union campaign to defend rail jobs and services and call on the Government to ensure that rail investment provides a green stimulus for the economy. Rail is the low-carbon alternative to cars and lorries and must be promoted to meet our current climate change commitments."

**** FOSBR ****

Grand Competition Winner

Winner of the FOSBR Newsletter 69 competition was:

*Mr Rob Carruthers
of Wotton-under-Edge, Glos*

A cheque from FOSBR is winging its way to Rob, so he can try out the Severn Beach line for a whole week with a sparkling new FGW season ticket!

*** Congratulations Rob! ***

A Letter from a local politician:

You may scoff, but as a politician I need to influence where I can. Unlike in Europe, where cities keep local tax income and don't have to play contorted games with central government, things here in Bristol are not so easy.

In Bristol, there is a strange juggling game, trying to change the actions of WoE Partnership, Network Rail, GosW, and sometimes the will of officers, perhaps concealed by years of secretive practice.

I agree I can do little, but I will be public with what I discover, I will encourage a fully accountable ITA or similar to be set up, I will try and get something that can be called a "transport interchange" at Temple Meads. Hopefully by being open, listening to those with greater knowledge and trying to do the right thing, we can all make some positive changes to the Bristol's transport arrangements.

I remain optimistic.

So that's alright then! Ed.

FOSBR celebrates success!

In 2007 FOSBR campaigned for a half-hourly service. We successfully persuaded Bristol City Council to pay for an extra train on the Severn Beach line. The Council's investment of £1.3 million from May 2008 over three years has already resulted in:

- A more frequent and a more reliable service
- A service on Sundays
- Passenger numbers up by 37% - 40%
- Track and station improvements,
- New information points providing reliable train information
- More trains for Gloucester and Newport stopping at Lawrence Hill and Stapleton Road

FOSBR – Campaigning and Achieving for Bristol's Railways

Achieving a 30 minute clock-face timetable

FOSBR's well publicised "Half Hour Train" campaign called for a regular, thirty minute frequency service at all Bristol suburban stations. With the current infrastructure on the Severn Beach line, a roughly 40 minute service interval was achieved, following a three year investment from Bristol City Council.

Whilst this improvement was very welcome, FOSBR believes that a truly "clock face" timetable will be necessary to achieve even more take up of the service. When trains are regular and run to a clock face, people no longer need to consult a timetable – they just know they can "turn up and go".

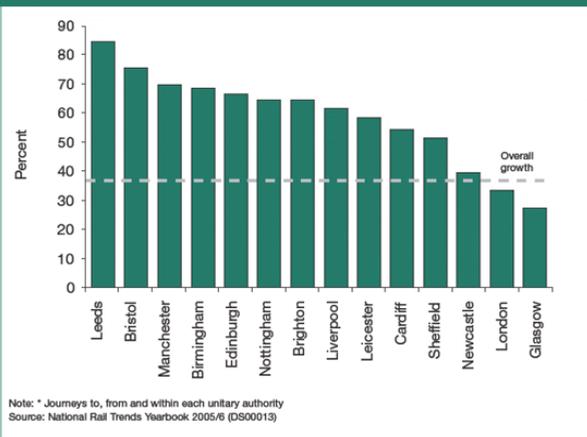
The issue for the Severn Beach line in particular is the lack of sufficient passing loops. Currently, trains on the branch line can cross only at Clifton Down or Avonmouth – and this imposes a 40 minute maximum service interval.

To improve this to every 30 minutes, the best option would be to **extend** the double track loop at Clifton Down right through to Montpelier, allowing greater flexibility for trains to cross each other. Associated work would also be to reinstate the out-of-use platforms at both Redland and Montpelier stations and to provide new passenger access to them.

There is already a new **buzz** around and about our local rail network, with ever increasing numbers of passengers making the local train their choice for all (or part) of their travel around the city.

The graph below shows that demand for rail journeys increased an astonishing **75%** in Bristol between 1995 and 2005. And this growth was achieved with **little or no infrastructure investment**. We now need to continue to support and expand this phenomenal growth by calling for essential upgrades to our local rail network **NOW!**

Figure 5.2: Percentage increase in total rail passenger journeys by city* (1995/96– 2004/05)



Parson Street Renaissance

Nowadays, Parson Street Station really welcomes its passengers. Bright yellow, red and orange mosaics decorate the entrance and the stairways.

From the bad old days, when the station was served by as little as two trains per day, the station is now another symbol of the success of the Severnside Community Rail Partnership, who are working with local people of all ages to breath new life into this local station. Parson Street Primary School have even adopted their local station.

Walk down the steps and rejoice that you are not the only passenger! Parson Street has achieved a **100%** increase in passengers in recent months.

Parson Street is on the line between Exeter and Bristol, plus it is the junction for Ashton Gate and the longed for passenger rail service to Portishead.

The station is also served by regular bus services on the city's first Showcase Bus Route.

Walkers and cyclists can reach the station from the Malago Greenway. This ten mile walking route from Parson Street through Yanley, Barrow Court and Flax Bourton to Nailsea Station includes rivers, woods and a nature reserve. A real treat with few road crossings.

Think positive! Parson Street has the potential to become a transport hub and make a positive contribution to reducing Bristol's traffic chaos.

* Throughout the day, trains from Bristol Temple Meads depart for Parson Street at 25 minutes past the hour, with some additional services at peak times. The journey takes 3-4 minutes – just try matching that on the bus!!

*** Action Stations! *** Action Stations! *** Action Stations! ***

Last issue's action station was Redland, so for this issue, we'll take a look at sister station, Montpellier.

Opened on the 1st October 1874 as **Montpellier** (two 'L's), the station changed it's name to today's spelling (with one 'L) in 1888.

There was a station master and station house from the start and the lucky man was provided with a coalhouse in 1883 - and an extra bedroom in 1887! The Station Master's duties were withdrawn in 1926 and the post merged with the management of Clifton Down, though the station was still staffed until July 1967. The main station building was destroyed during an air raid in 1941.

Montpellier was a "Joint" station, served by trains of both the Great Western and Midland railways. It was once possible to travel direct to Bath, via Fishponds.

Few people know that Montpellier had an extensive goods yard (and it's own signal box). The goods yard was actually on the other side of Station Road, the railway crossing to the site of the new Colston Girl's School building via a road over-bridge. You can still see the old abutments in Station Road to this very day. The goods yard handled much coal and general traffic and was closed as late as November 1965.

Today, Montpellier serves the busy Gloucester Road shopping street and is also convenient for the delights of St Andrews Park and also the bohemian district of Montpellier itself.

Many newcomers to the city pronounce the name "Mont-pell-i-yay" in the French way, but as a born and bred Bristolian, I can assure you that the correct Bristolian pronunciation is "**Mont-pee-lee-er**"!

FOSBR Glittering Quiz #2

Roll up! Roll up! Roll up!

This issue's exciting FOSBR quiz concentrates on our rich railway history and this time round, might require a little knowledge of major stations far and wide across the UK. Though a little research on the Internet should also get you the answers

So, it's "**Station Name Game Time**"!!!

Here's the rules: We all know Bristol **Temple Meads**, but the old railway companies knew a thing or two about marketing and frequently named their major stations with more than just the name of the cities they served. For example, Edinburgh **Waverley** or Reading **General**. Below is a list of towns or cities served by such stations – all you have to do is - **send us the full names!**

1. **Dover** _____
2. **Hull** _____
3. **Bradford** _____
4. **Manchester** _____
5. **Kensington** _____
6. **Wembley** _____
7. **Nottingham** _____
8. **Loch Eil** _____
9. _____ **Redcar**
10. **Coatbridge** _____

* Where a town has two or more stations with extended names, any of the names will be accepted if correct.

First out of the hat with all correct answers will win a week's season ticket to travel the Severn Beach line to their heart's content! Answer to the Editor by eMail or FOSBR by post. See back page for details. The Editor's decision as to the winner is **FINAL**. Good luck & have FUN!

CAMPAIGNS UPDATE

Local MP's are calling for your views on Transport in the South West. The deadline for responses is **Thursday 16th July**. FOSBR calls on all supporters to "do their bit" and send their views to:

Emma Sawyer,
Senior Regional Committees Assistant,
House of Commons,
7 Millbank, LONDON SW1P 3JA

mail: regionalcommittees@parliament.uk

Good news from STAG!

(Severn Tunnel Action Group)

Across the water, **STAG** are celebrating the success of their latest campaign for an additional evening train from Bristol, with a good connection for passengers travelling onwards to Chepstow, Caldicot and Lydney. Last year, they held a meeting with cross party MP's and Secretary of State for Railways Tom Harris, to campaign for this new service, which eliminates a former 50 minute wait at Severn Tunnel Junction. The new service (from Portsmouth), leaves Bristol at 20:04 (19:54 on Fridays).

TransWilts Progress

Over in Wiltshire, there is tentative progress on improving the miserable "**two train per day**" service between Salisbury and Swindon (cut from **five** in 2006, when passenger numbers were growing at 35% per annum). There is now a general consensus that these service cuts were a "**step too far**", and a workable six trains per day timetable has now been formulated with FGW. This could be operating from December 2009, but only if sufficient pressure is maintained on those responsible for transport in Wiltshire. You can help by signing the TransWilts pledge at:

www.transwilts.org.uk/pledge.html

STOP PRESS: New 50% Rail-card discount on Beach line ...	Eastside Roots packed Summer programme ...
News reaches your Editor that from the May 2009 timetable change, First Great Western have increased the discount for fares with a railcard on the Severn Beach line to 50% , better than the usual 1/3 off.	Eastside Roots, that's the happy people at the new Community Garden on Stapleton Road Station have a packed programme of summer events. Just for example are the two following:
However, as at June 16, they were still having "difficulties" with their Fares systems. Apparently, they will have this fully implemented " by the end of the month " (i.e. June 30 th).	4/5 July – Permaculture Demonstration Garden 18 July – Medicinal Herb Garden Eastside Roots also hold regular plant sales etc., so why not pop in and see what they're up to?

What's On Where ...

Sat 11 Jul 18:00 – 20:00	Great Western Staff Club, Temple Meads	FOSBR Meeting Transport in the South West – MP's call for evidence The Rail Industry during the Recession – RMT Campaign Return train 20:34
Mon Jul 13 07:30	Redland Station	Call out Support – Commuters chance to respond to MP's invitation to assess public transport in the South West. See David Wood's letter on Page 3.
Tue 14 Jul 18:30	Clifton Down Station	Five mile linear walk to Shirehampton station. Pub stop, return train at 21:43
Wed 5 Aug 18:00-20:00	Cornubia, Temple St.	FOSBR Working Party Meeting – All welcome. Return train 20:34
Sat 10 th Oct 19:00	Severn Beach Village Hall, Ableton Lane	"Slide Show presentation" Around Bristol by tram' by the renowned Peter Davey. Return trains 21:29 / 22:54.

STAY IN TOUCH with FOSBR!!

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The Editor welcomes relevant contributions of articles and/or letters for publication in the FOSBR Newsletter. Deadline for the Autumn Issue is **11 September 2009**.