

FoSBR YULETIDE WARMER

Newsletter: December 2010. issue # 75

¡End of year photo special!

Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year!



Bristol Parkway

Already looking part of an electrified railway.

- GREAT WESTERN ELECTRIFICATION.
- HST TOUR OF BRISTOL'S UNTAPPED RAIL POTENTIAL.
- GOODS INWARD: FREIGHT TERMINAL AT PARSON ST. REOPENED.
- 15 YEAR ANNIVERSARY DINNER AT LA RUCA.

Saturday 22 January 2011

FOSBR AGM 6 pm to 8 pm

Speakers Bristol RMT secretary Gary Abbott and Bristol ASLEF secretary Bernard Kennedy 7 pm. Randall Room, All Saints Church Hall, Pembroke Rd, nr Clifton Down Station

ELECTRIFICATION HEADS WEST.

Unlike other government departments rail seems to have emerged relatively unscathed following the latest spending review.

Once again it has been shown that the laws of thermodynamics cannot be altered to suite either political ideologies or new business models. Objective and rational analysis has pushed electrification to the top of UK rail agenda. The benefits in terms of cost effectiveness over the long term, comfort, performance, environmental efficiency and low maintenance costs have made continued investment in electrification an obvious choice.

Brunel tried pneumatic power transfer as a way of removing power generation off trains in the 19th centry and would have been an early adaptor using electricity to transfer power had the technology been available to him at the time. Sadly he didn't live long enough for electrification to become standard on the Great Western Main line and it is an insult to his memory that it continues to be deprived long proven and efficient technology.

But this could all about to change with the go ahead of electrification to Newbury and Oxford (via Didcot) the wires are beginning to march their way west.

Fingers are crossed in this part of the world that overhead power will come to Bristol and reach out to Wales and allow the Principality to have electrified rail lines.

A decision is due early in the New Year as to the extent of the electrification. Common sense says that the wires should go all the way to Swansea since once the cable rigging machines get going it makes sense to carry on to the end of the line. However the complexities of the department of transports rolling stock procurement programme have clouded the issue. Hopefully the fog will have cleared by January and sparks effect will come to Bristol, Newport, Cardiff and Swansea not only improving long range trains but enabling high performance local services to work these major urban centres.

East to West and Newbury.

It is interesting that the line from Oxford to Didcot is to be electrified, combined with a reopened connection from Oxford to Cambridge (the old varsity line). Electric trains could run from Wales and the West via Oxford to Cambridge and Norfolk avoiding the London.

Electrification to Newbury also makes sense for the Bristol area, as it can be continued on to Westbury, Bath and thence Bristol providing a diversionary route.

In summary it is encouraging that electrification is beginning to take on a life of its own, each stage of electrification justifying the next. Starting a virtuous circle of improvement begetting improvement.

In addition to running up to date trains, electrification to Bristol will almost certainly mean the return to four tracks up Filton bank thus enabling the return of a decent local rail service to the capital of the West Country.

Now is the last chance for all concerned to lobby the powers that be to bring the Great Western Main line up to international standards. Otherwise we will have the rail service we deserve.

Freight returns to Parson Street. Reopened terminal. How about a reopened station or two?



Containers being unloaded at Freightliners bonded yard near Parson Street. Before being hauled by road to Avonmouth. Shame they couldn't go the whole distance on steel.

FOSBR Indymedia Christmas Revue – a look back at 2010 and forward to the next years.

On Monday 6th December FOSBR teamed up with Indymedia, an independent media network with a social conscience, to bring a light-hearted look at 2010. The event was held at the Cube Cinema in Dove St, near Stokes Croft. FOSBR started off the evening with films, poems, speeches and songs on a rail theme and Indymedia were in the second half with various internet film clips of the year, mostly with a political protest theme.

The FOSBR section started with an introduction from Bernard Lane, explaining to the Indymedia people who we were. Tina Biggs then presented a short introduction into past campaigns and victories on the Severn Beach Line, and then a powerpoint presentation on the doings of 2010, being the Awards ceremony, the various outings and celebrations, and finishing with an outline of the current campaigns. Rob Dixon then gave a detailed update of the current campaigns, and Eric Wildman gave us a vision of the next step.

Then there were two films: "Night Mail" (with a poem by WH Auden) about the train carrying mail to Scotland, and the beloved Severn Beach Line film by local film producer Diana Taylor and poet David Johnson. Two poetry readings followed: David Johnson brought us his latest poems, one humorous one about "trying to compose a poem about Bristol Harbour Festival", and Julie Boston brought us "Hector Transport Director" about a fictitious council officer discovering the Severn Beach Line for the first time. We were very sorry that Peter Gould was too ill to come to bring us his song about traffic congestion "A Rhapsody of Impulse Buying".

Bernard Lane interviewed Lionel White about the massive enterprise that is the timetable distribution, and finally Jean Watson led us on the guitar for a sing-song: "The Severn Beach Line Song" and the seasonal "Jingle Bells" (with Severn Beach lyrics!) The Indymedia people appreciated it all and commented that a sing-song was a first for their group!

Some of us stayed for the Indymedia second half, and found the film clips alternately sobering and funny: particularly moving was the locally-filmed footage of the Bristol anti-cuts marches with some salient facts and figures. Overall a fruitful collaboration.

Many thanks to all those contributing, especially to Tom from Indymedia who let us share their evening. We recommend their next film night, "Where are the women? Here they are!" on Monday 10th January 2010 at the Cube! **Tina Biggs**

HST EXPLORES BRISTOL'S UNTAPPED RAIL POTENTIAL.

To celebrate 175 years of Brunel, Modern Rail magazine hired an HST from Paddington to Bristol taking in the lines that FoSBR have been campaigning to bring back to passenger use. Here is a taster of what travelling the Henbury Loop and Portbury lines are like. Enjoy.



Via the Aerodrome at Filton... Henbury loop



Under Brunel's master piece... Portishead line



Past Sea Mill on the other side of the Avon. Portishead Line



To Portbury Docks to view the imported (and some exported) cars. Frustratingly close to Portishead.

If the political will was there a temporary station could be constructed near to Portbury similar to Workington North to allow a basic service into Bristol. Using rail right now to tackle Portisheads transport misery.

FREE BUS



Now how do you get to the Centre from Temple Meads again?

Temple Meads has always suffered from not being at the heart of the city, while this wasn't such a problem when Bristol had its tram system. It has always been a problem since their demise.

Free Bus is aiming to be a not for profit bus company whose intention is to get Bristol moving again. Base on the principle of free at the point of service thus making it the transport mode of choice. There are challenges on how on long term funding but these are not deemed insurmountable. This organisation is not focused on shareholder value but on the wider social and economic benefits to the city of Bristol. If these benefits are properly recognised then funding will be forthcoming.

A two day trail service around the centre of Bristol was run on the 10th-11th of Dec without any problems. Based on the experience of the trail the intention is to run a regular service for a minimum of 6 months in the new year.

The long term intention to run a City wide service providing a viable alternative to people using their cars in the City. Integrating with Bristol's improving local rail network will create a public transport system that could make a difference.

More details can be found on their website www.freebus.org.uk



On 24th September 2010 we celebrated the 15th Anniversary of FOSBR with a meal for 40 at La Ruca Café in Gloucester Road. Bernard Lane, Peter Gould and Julie Boston spoke about the experience of campaigning through the years. There was a display round the walls of newspaper clippings from past campaigns. Presentations were made to Peter and Julie, and the Severn Beach Line film directed by Diana Taylor and featuring David Johnson's poem was shown. The Evening Post took a photo of the revelers, and the article with an overview of the story of FOSBR was published on 15th September:

Quoting the Evening Post article: "Let's be honest, groups of people who get together to talk about trains have developed a general reputation for a certain type of geekiness. But the Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways (FOSBR) has never been that kind of group. Far from concerning themselves with the self-imposed autism of pointless rail-based facts and figures collecting, since its inception in 1995 FOSBR has been a vibrantly radical movement that has battled for the rights of commuters across the city."

The article also quoted Rob Dixon, Press Officer: "We've achieved a lot over the years. Passenger numbers on the suburban Bristol lines have more than doubled since 1995, but there's still a lot to do. We're so far behind other comparable cities across the country. We need to catch up with cities like Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham, where commuters in the outlying suburbs know they can walk to their local train station and enjoy good, reliable half-hourly services into the centre of their city."

Tina Biggs

Dates for the diary

Saturday 22 January 2011

FOSBR AGM 6 pm to 8 pm

Speakers Bristol RMT secretary Gary Abbott and Bristol ASLEF secretary Bernard Kennedy 7 pm.
Randall Room, All Saints Church Hall, Pembroke Rd, nr Clifton Down Station.

Friday 8 April 2011 FOSBR 6 pm to 8 pm

Speaker:: - David McCallum BA (Hons) MSc CMILT Associate (Rail & Public Transport) Capita Symonds.
will give a power point presentation at Halo, Gloucester Road (200 metres from Arches !!!)

A brief synopsis below –

The Ebbw Valley Railway project involved the establishment of an new hourly direct passenger service from Ebbw Vale to Cardiff, requiring the complete upgrading of 18 miles of former freight railway including 3 miles of new passing loop and construction of six new stations. Unusually the project was procured and delivered by the local authorities prior to being handed back to Network Rail. Since opening in 2008 usage as surpassed initial forecasts with around 600,000 trips per annum.

David McCallum was the project manager for this project from the first feasibility studies in 1998, through to its opening in 2008 and lives in Bristol. His presentation will cover the development and implementation of the project, some of the challenges encountered and developments since opening.

April McNulty Report on rail franchises 2011

In April 2010 Campaign for Better Transport reported that 38 campaign groups, ASLEF, RMT & TSSA opposed the government's consultation document 'as it could encourage companies to run down or cut socially necessary services which don't make much money, but which people rely on'.

Thursday 5 May Local elections in some Bristol wards

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