

ESTA



News

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Autumn 2017

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OCTOBER FOR TRAIN & BUS SURVEY AND AUTUMN MEETING

1. SURVEY OF TRAIN AND BUS JOURNEYS

Every year we ask members and other users to report on public transport journeys which they make in our area during a particular month. This year that month is October, and we enclose questionnaires for the survey.

In 2016 we received nearly 150 replies from members and these were very helpful in identifying good and bad aspects of travel.

This year we should like two additional pieces of information:

- on a train journey, what was your final destination? For example, was your trip from, say, Darsham to Ipswich the first stage in a longer journey to, perhaps, Harwich, London or Cambridge?

- on a bus journey, what was the name (if you know it) of the stop at which you boarded the vehicle, and the stop at which you alighted?

You can also download the form online, via our website.

You can hand in forms at our October 14th meeting and obtain additional forms at any time from our Chairman or Secretary.

We look forward to receiving them!

2. ESTA AUTUMN MEETING IN SAXMUNDHAM

On Saturday October 14th at 14.00 for 14.15 we shall hold our autumn public meeting in the Gannon Rooms, Saxmundham. The venue is in Station Approach, between the Bell Hotel and the railway station, only a short walk from the bus stops.

The first part of the meeting will deal with public transport issues on which ESTA has been campaigning, or is planning to campaign in coming weeks, with particular emphasis on rail matters.

After a refreshment break, we shall then be pleased to welcome as our guest speaker Mr David Jordan, Marketing Manager of First Eastern Counties Buses. He will update us on the company's services throughout our area - including Ipswich Park & Ride, the services to Woodbridge, Wickham Market, Saxmundham, Leiston and Aldeburgh and services in the northern part of East Suffolk. This will be an opportunity to ask questions and make comments on bus issues - especially relevant since the changes which took place in July. Mr Jordan also hopes to be accompanied by a colleague.

As usual at our meetings, there will also be a good range of leaflets, timetables and publication of transport interest.

CHANGES TO BUSES IN SUFFOLK COASTAL DISTRICT

ESTA has welcomed those changes to bus services 64/5 and 800 between Ipswich, Woodbridge, Saxmundham, Leiston and Aldeburgh which give more frequent services and better bus/train connections at Saxmundham. In July we posted a suitable item on our website.

Passengers now have between 18 and 23 minutes to change between train and bus at Saxmundham (including the short walk between the station and the Railway Bridge or Church Street bus stop), which is a great improvement on the previous situation.

However, we are concerned about the effect on Snape and Tunstall, with only one early morning bus to Ipswich and two early evening returns.

Our local committee members Peter Cogar, Peter Cannon and Geoffrey Lilley met at the end of July to study the new timetables and sent a detailed letter to First Eastern Counties. In addition, Peter Cogar has written to Suffolk County Council about its sponsored service 62, operated by PF Travel, which gives a very basic service between Snape, Campsea Ashe, Framlingham, Wickham Market and Woodbridge. We strongly believe that this should be enhanced, to make it more useful.

Among the suggestions made about service 64/5 and 800 were an additional stop in Rendlesham for service 800 and how a couple of 2-hour gaps in this service might be filled; extending service 64 to Sutton Hoo on Sundays when the National Trust site is open; and issues concerning announcements, publicity and bus stop names.

Indeed, the last of these points does not just concern the Woodbridge - Aldeburgh area. There are some other places in East Suffolk where the name given by Suffolk County Council to a bus stop may not be the one by which local people best know it. This could form the basis of a wider request to the County Council by ESTA. In this year's survey of bus and train journeys we are asking members to state which bus stop(s) they used - and a comment that it could be given a more appropriate name would also be helpful. For example, which means more to people "Saxmundham Street Farm Road" (SCC) or "Saxmundham Railway Bridge" (First)?

In reply to our letter to First Bus, the company thanked us for our comments but said they are unlikely to make any timetable changes on routes 64/5/800 until summer 2018, as they consider it important to have "a stable network that is given a chance to grow."

AN AFTERNOON IN FRAMLINGHAM

Service 62 is one of six bus services by four different companies which operate to Framlingham - but some only run once or twice a day and so you have to plan your trip carefully.

On August 21st our intrepid reporter caught the 13.45 from outside Campsea Ashe station (also known as Wickham Market) after coffee and a bacon roll in the cafe. The driver was playing Classic FM in the minibus, one more passenger was picked up in Hacheston and arrival was on time at Framlingham's Bridge Street bus shelter (which contains a helpful map of the town.). After an afternoon rambling, sightseeing, eating and drinking, our reporter caught the 17.50 minibus back - bringing him to Woodbridge in time to catch the train home.

Service 62 is operated by PF Travel, who also do private hire. You can contact them on 01394-388333 or e-mail pftravel@btconnect.com, and copies of their timetable are available from Bob and Rosamund in the cafe at Campsea Ashe Station House. There is surely scope for additional such minibus links in the area, using this station as a hub?

Service 62 does not operate at weekends, but Galloway's service 118 also runs four times a day on Saturdays linking Framlingham and Ipswich.

STATION HOUSE, CAMPSEA ASHE (also known as Wickham Market station)

You can now enjoy coffee, tea and light refreshments in the beautifully restored station building. In addition, four rooms of varying sizes are available for hire, for periods ranging from one hour to a full day or evening.

Car parking is available, but of course there is also a train calling every hour (two-hourly on Sundays).

There are rates tailored to the needs of businesses of various sizes, voluntary bodies, charities, public service organisations or families. You can enquire and book in person or by phone (07856-810828) or via the website www.stationhousecampseaashe.co.uk

STATION AUDIT

In the spring of 2013, ESTA committee member Peter Cogar visited each station on the East Suffolk Line to conduct an audit of facilities - such as the presence and adequacy of signs, lighting, seating, shelters and information. Peter Pennington proposes to form a small group of members to conduct a similar audit during the coming winter, partly to gauge progress since 2013, and partly to highlight what still needs to be done. We shall discuss this further at our October 14th meeting.

BRAMPTON: Our member Mrs Jill Williams has been in contact with the Office of Rail & Road, who have replied that Greater Anglia plan to replace the lights as part of a station renewal scheme.

The current lights will be replaced by LED and PIR (passive infrared) lights which come on when they detect motion and which hopefully will be dimmable.

This is part of a plan across the Greater Anglia network to reduce energy costs.

LIFE IN A VISITOR INFORMATION POINT

Trevor Garrod writes:

On most Tuesdays during the summer I have spent 4-5 hours as a volunteer in the Visitor Information Point on Lowestoft station.

Following the closure of Tourist Information Offices in Waveney District, Visitor Information Points were set up (for example in Beccles station cafe, the Angel Hotel at Halesworth and Southwold Library) and, at the initiative of the Community Rail Partnership, in one of the vacant rooms on Lowestoft station.

Three other people man the facility on different days and when it is closed customers are directed to the town's library, which is open seven days a week.

The Visitor Information Point is well stocked with leaflets, timetables, maps and other items of interest to visitors and has a few items for sale, which help to cover its running costs.

I have been opening up in time for the trains arriving from Ipswich at 10.43 and Norwich at 10.52, and usually closing at 15.00. That caters for most people coming on day trips; but also arriving and departing holidaymakers.

Some visitors just want to pick up leaflets, maps or timetables, but others have a variety of needs and queries include "What's happened to the coffee shop that used to be on this station?", "Is there a toilet?", "Can I hire a bicycle in Lowestoft", "Can I charge up my mobile phone here?" and "When does the ferry leave?". Another quite common one is "We've got two hours / half a day / three days in Lowestoft. What do you recommend us to see?"

It is interesting and worthwhile activity - and in lulls in the work I can work on things such as writing this ESTA News...

BUCKENHAM ADVENTURE

One Sunday in August some ESTA members alighted from the train at Buckenham, on the Lowestoft - Norwich line, mainly to visit Strumpshaw Fen nature reserve, 20-25 minutes' walk way.

The car park at Strumpshaw Fen was full, but as we had come by public transport we did not have to pay an entry fee.

Strumpshaw Fen is open to visitors throughout the year and the map given to everyone in the visitor centre show three walks of varying length through woods, past marshes and along the bank of the River Yare, past bird hides, along well-maintained paths with plenty of seats.

We also learned more about the small community of Buckenham through a visit to its mediaeval church (used once a year for a summer service) and a chance encounter with a lady who had been married there.

We caught the 17.11 train from Buckenham and were pleased to find that, on arrival at Lowestoft, it formed the 18.05 along the East Suffolk Line to Ipswich.

"DAVE'S DAY OUT"

This was the sign on the front of the Halesworth Community Transport bus in which our member David Smith took a party of ESTA members to Bressingham steam and garden centre on Sunday August 13th. We had an enjoyable day out and a good journey in fine summer weather to an attraction that is not easy to reach by public transport.

REPLACEMENT BUSES - ANY PROBLEMS?

It is sometimes inevitable that trains have to be diverted or replaced by buses when there is major engineering work. When customers have paid for a train journey, it is reasonable for them to receive a comparable standard on the alternative.

This happened on the Norwich - Lowestoft line on certain weekends last winter; and in late July/early August south of Halesworth on the East Suffolk Line.

In the latter case, Greater Anglia staff were seen on the buses issuing and checking tickets. If, however, you experienced any difficulty during the period July 29th - August 6th, please let us know.

MORE NEW TRAINS UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Trevor Garrod represented ESTA at the viewing of a mock-up in the Bombardier works at Derby on August 30th. The new electric trains being built there are due to enter service in East Anglia in 2019/20.

These trains are mainly of interest to East Suffolk travellers because we shall sometimes be changing in or out of one at Ipswich or Norwich. There will be three trains an hour on the main line between Norwich and London, of which two are likely to be a Stadler Inter-City (such as we saw in a mock-up at Norwich in June) and the other a Bombardier which will also call at more stations in Essex. This train will not have refreshments, but will have flexispace that can accommodate up to six bicycles.

ESTA STALLS

The weather was ideal for this year's Woodbridge Regatta on July 16th, when the ESTA gazebo was erected by mid morning and for nearly six hours we were kept busy distributing public transport information, selling items and answering many questions about local and regional train and bus services.

Thank you for David Smith (for help before the day) and Trevor Garrod, Peter Cogar and family, Peter Pennington, John and Sue Gordon for help on the day.

By the time you read this ESTA NEWS we hope to have had another successful stand during the Trolleybus Weekend at the East Anglia Transport Museum. This popular open-air museum will still be open on Sundays in October (with the X22 bus going past it) and then for eight (pre-booked) days in December when Santa Claus will visit.

Details on www.eatransportmuseum.co.uk

We shall return to the Ipswich Transport Museum on Sunday November 19th, when we shall have an ESTA stall indoors at their Classic Buses and Coaches Event. Three members have already offered to help, and one or two more would be welcome. It is not necessary to be there all day - but you may also like to take a vintage bus ride.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

ESTA committee meeting in Saxmundham on Wednesday November 29th, 19.00 in the Gannon Rooms

ESTA Spring Meeting in Oulton Broad or Lowestoft on Saturday February 17th. Full details will be in the winter issue of ESTA NEWS.

ESTA Annual General Meeting on Saturday May 12th in Woodbridge.

WELCOME to Councillor Louise Gooch, who will now be Waveney District Council's representative on the ESTA committee.

STEAMWORKS is the name of the new centre being built by the Southwold Railway Trust on the old gasworks site in Blyth Road, only 10 minutes' walk from the town centre. The Southwold Railway Shop has moved there, alongside a cafe and museum and a miniature railway. An engine shed is being created for 3-foot gauge locomotives.

To keep up-to-date with the project, log on to www.southwoldrailway.co.uk

BOOKS

1. ESTA - THE FIRST 50 YEARS; our anniversary book is still available at £3-00 (post free) from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ. Please make cheque payable to ESTA. It is a good introduction to our association and demonstrates what can be achieved over the years by a determined cross-party campaign for improved public transport.

2. EAST SUFFOLK LINE WALKS - The 2016 edition of this book is out of print, but work is going on to update it and issue a revised edition in early 2018. Meanwhile, you can also find the walks on line by logging on to www.eastsuffolklinewalks.com/walks. Most of the walks are between two local stations; others are circular walks or walks which also include a bus ride to or from a station.

On August 27th, the record number of 85 people took part in the Easterling Walk from Oulton Broad South station to Lowestoft Ness. On this occasion, good press and social media publicity in advance, which also emphasised the historical interest of parts of the route, were no doubt a factor

3. BRITAIN'S GROWING RAILWAY - A new edition of this extremely useful reference book has just been published by Railfuture, the national voluntary society for rail users, to which ESTA is affiliated. It gives details of all new and reopened stations on the British rail network since the time of the 1960s Beeching cuts; together with new lines. A new feature also indicates how many passengers are using these new or reopened stations and lines - which includes Melton (re-opened in 1984) on our line.

The 192-page illustrated book costs £9.95 (post free) and is available from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Rd South, Lowestoft, NRE32 1RQ. It will also be on sale at our autumn meeting on October 14th in Saxmundham.

ESTA'S LITTLE SISTERS

ESTA works closely with its two sister organisations - Felixstowe Travelwatch which is now 45 years old (www.felixstowetravelwatch.onesuffolk.net) and the East Norfolk Transport Users' Association which is now 40 years old (www.entua.org.uk).

Felixstowe Travelwatch will be holding its autumn public meeting on Tuesday October 17th at 14.30 in the Salvation Army Hall, Felixstowe.

ENTUA held its summer meeting and AGM in Great Yarmouth on August 16th.

Obviously there are local train and bus matters in which we have a common interest. We shall also send comments to the Department for Transport on the franchise renewal of East Midland Trains. This is of relevance to us in East Anglia because the Norwich - Peterborough - Nottingham - Liverpool service provides a key link between our region and the Midlands and North of England.

ESTA FEEDBACK - AND TRAIN TOILETS

One of our members has used the ESTA Feedback facility (available from our website) to report on correspondence with Greater Anglia on non-functioning toilets on a train on which she travelled. The reply was that on-train toilets were "complimentary" and so no refund could be given to passengers if these were out of use.

Perhaps with today's advances in communications, the real-time information screens at stations could indicate if a train has non-functioning toilets?

INFORMATION SCREEN AT LOWESTOFT BUS STATION

The main information screen at Lowestoft Bus Station does not show Anglian's service 61 from Kessingland to Yarmouth, but it does show the other services along the coast.

We have taken up this matter with Suffolk County Council whose Senior Transport Office (Data) has replied that this is because the service calls at stands 9 and 10, and the screen only shows buses calling at stands 1-8. The officer adds: "This is due to a technical issue and our supplier is working to resolve this and as soon as it is, the remaining services will be displayed."

DEADLINE FOR ESTA NEWS 143 will be December 5th. Material can be sent to Trevor Garrod at editor@eastsuffolktravel.org.uk. This edition is due to be distributed immediately after Christmas.

**Mainline Matters – questions and comments from a weekly commuter
Simon Barrow (who has a house near Sudbourne and travels from Melton)**

Say three hours door to door one way, six hours round-trip, forty eight weeks in the year, 240 hours a year and I'm lucky, just think of what that is for those who do an East Suffolk - Liverpool St. trip every working day. Either way, it shows the high level of interest we have. If 10,000 hours in any trade makes you an expert, then we commuters are right up there and what a stake we have in the pursuit of excellence.

Not having had a bad experience for some time (I did not go up much in August) I have to say most of the mainline trips are not so horrific as some make out. However, problems can break out any time and many mainline users will be familiar with the instant formation of East Suffolk Line travellers gathered round one embattled Greater Anglia staff member on Platform 2 at Ipswich. They are questioning delays and a missed connection or being told that, because a driver has not made it, the service has been cancelled. It's not that staff member's fault (how could it be?) but he's the poor soul who has to take the flak. **Action point 1: Question the train operating company as to how they ensure they know how their people feel about the conduct of their company, and that of Network Rail. Action point 2. Ask the Unions too. How do they listen to their members and if so what feedback do they get and what do they do with it? i.e. tell the company, tell Network Rail, tell their members, tell the media??**

Now on to the typical cancellation and delay reasons stated on the train. My log of future journeys from now on will try to note these and quantify the delay time and explanation. Here are three familiar ones for starters:

-‘Signalling problems in the Witham area’ - that does not tell you much and I want to know **Action point 2 what signalling problems cost in delays to the company and do they get reimbursement from the Network Rail? Furthermore why do signals break down? Is it original design, the maintenance or the age of the equipment?**

-‘a broken down train near Diss’ **Action point 3. How often do trains break down and why is that? Like to see an analysis of the reasons.**

Action point 4. Come to think of it how do our problems such as these in Anglia compare with the rest of the UK and, just as important. compared with the rest of Europe in particular Germany and France? Action point 5. Do these comparisons currently exist and, if so, can we assured that they will continue as and when Brexit happens?

-‘a fatality in the Romford area’. Yes of course any fatality is a tragedy and on the railway I understand it is always treated as a crime scene and takes hours. I presume this means suicides. One staff member at Liverpool Street told me that this happens more on this line than elsewhere and one of the reasons is that there is a mental patients clinic in north east London near the line. I realise that this maybe completely untrue but **Action point 6, What are the facts on this line and how do they compare with other UK lines? Action point 7, and what does each of these tragedies cost the company? Action point 8, are the railways among those corporate members of our community for whom this is a significant and desperately sad issue? If so what discussions have they had with the Mental Health authorities re care and security of patients and out patients?**

I love the railways, I want them to be successful and for them to have whatever investment is necessary to make them world-class. I want their employees and leaders to be proud as punch about what they do. They strike me as good people but too often having to bear the brunt of long term strategic and day-to-day issues which are the responsibility of bosses and investors way above them (and who we never see or hear from on this level of detail).

Simon Barrow, 6th Sept 2017

Please send any comments or questions via chairman@eastsuffolktravel.org.uk

ESTA CHRISTMAS LUNCH - SATURDAY DECEMBER 16th
CLEONE'S RESTAURANT, THE ANGEL HOTEL, HALESWORTH

We look forward to seeing many members at our Christmas Lunch, due to start at 13:00. The Angel is at the southern end of the pedestrianised Thoroughfare, some 15 minutes' walk from the rail station and closer to Saxons Way bus stop.

Please indicate on the menu which dish(es) you wish to order.

Please send the completed form and a cheque payable to ESTA to Geoffrey Lilley, 43 The Glebes, Snape, Saxmundham, IP17 1QF to arrive by December 1st.

STARTERS:

Lightly spiced squash and coconut soup
Kiln roasted salmon
Game terrine
Pear, walnut and blue cheese salad

MAINS

Roast turkey
Roast belly pork
Sea bream
Mediterranean vegetable pasta

DESSERTS

Chocolate, almond, espresso torte
Honey panacotta
Panettone bread and butter pudding
Traditional Christmas pudding

Price: 2 courses £19.95 ; 3 courses £24.50 (including coffee)

I wish to order the items ticked above and enclose a cheque for £

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

EASTERLING WALK, 26TH AUG 2017

THE START



PARTICIPANTS EAGER FOR INFO!



THE FINISH

