



**British Section**

**Newsletter**

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## **European Association of Railway Personnel**

**Association Européenne des Cheminots (AISBL)**

**International Association (A.R. 4.2.1985)**

**International Non-governmental Organisation with advisory status to the  
Council of Europe (6.4.1977)**

**International Non-governmental Organisation with consultative status to  
the UN (decision E/ 2002/ of 22.07.2002) and member of the  
United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**

**Registered address: A.E.C (AISBL). - 25 Square de Meeus 1000 Brussels, Belgium**

**AEC EUROPEAN BUREAU – elected at the General Assembly at Poznan (PL), September 2017, and remaining in office provisionally until new elections can be held.**

**European President: Nicolae Dutu (RO)).**

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**Treasurer: Karl Eder (A). Asst Treasurer: Walter Rohr (A)**

### **AEC BRITISH SECTION COMMITTEE**

The Annual General Meeting for 2020 had to be cancelled due to the coronavirus outbreak. The existing committee and officers will remain in place as caretakers until such time as a new AGM can safely be convened, as follows

#### **Honorary President:**

Colin Charman,  
formerly Operations Manager  
Eurostar Engineering Centre.

#### **Past Honorary President & Hon. Life Member:**

Theo Steel (formerly Project Director ONE Railway)

#### **President:**

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#### **Checker of Accounts:**

Colin Charman,

The British Section Newsletter is produced by a small team headed by Philip Worsfold, who fulfils the non-committee role of Editor and Translator

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The list of committee members is on page 2.

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**A membership Application Form / GDPR Declaration is attached to the e-mail edition of this Newsletter.**

**The European web page is at: <http://www.A-E-C.net>** (hosted by the German section)  
AEC Latvia is at [www.ldzb.lv/aec/lv/](http://www.ldzb.lv/aec/lv/)

The aecitalia website is not recognised as representing the official Italian section of AEC. Vito Visconti is no longer a member of AEC.

The **French section website** has been **re-established** at:  
<http://aec-france.pagesperso-orange.fr/>

The **British Section Website** is available at <http://www.aec-europe.co.uk>

The British Section Facebook page is closed and in view of recent problems on Facebook, will remain so.

The British Section Newsletter is also available on line at the European website and on the British section website.

## EDITORIAL

I have received some correspondence from one of our members who thinks I'm being too political. He writes:

"Can we please concentrate on the 'main chance?' i.e. European rail and indeed European Railway people – the meaning of Association Européenne des Cheminots - some of whom could maybe be invited to write a 'guest editorial'. (perhaps) .... Janis Petersons on Baltic Rail, Horst Vanselow on DB, Nicolae Dutu on Romania etc. They must be wondering why we're saying this, after all We Are Europe (I was there 5 times last year getting camaraderie via Billy Elliot) Our Hon Vice President Theo Steel must wonder. Explanation needed. I phoned Bob Poynter- earlier senior manager on East Coast Mail Line) but he relinquished membership some time ago. It can turn people off to major on these personal themes"

To my way of thinking, the themes I discuss are more than personal, are truly European and affect AEC deeply. I have invited our member to write a piece himself to express an alternative view. I should also like to invite members from Europe to submit editorial matter – although we have had a recent article about Baltic rail, courtesy Janis. Meanwhile I stand by my position, critical though it may be. Three months on from our last edition and the world has changed. We are now in lockdown because of the pandemic of Covid-19. Some of Europe is beginning to emerge from lockdown and we experience the first signs here in Britain too. The virus has taken – is taking - its death toll; here greater than perhaps it might have been had our Government been more alert to its dangers. Worryingly, it has emerged that the country's preparations for any epidemic were woefully inadequate, with shortages across the board of ventilators, personal protective equipment and tests. But on 1<sup>st</sup> May it claimed that it had achieved its goal of 100 000 viral tests. In fact, it had changed the goal posts and there were apparently 100 000 tests available – not necessarily used and not proven accurate. Two facts not generally noted by the press were that the German army had donated 60 ventilators to Great Britain, whilst a batch ordered from China had been found unsuitable for hospital use and electrically unsafe; and that the EU has repatriated British nationals from places abroad – despite our being 'on our way out' of the Union.. Front line medical staff, many of them immigrants or of immigrant ethnicity, have been infected; and many have given their lives. In an earlier time, the Ministry of Defence was successfully sued for failing to adequately protect army personnel from the dangers of land mines because of inadequate equipment. How does our Government stand now? In the last edition I wrote 'we hear about draconian changes to prevent low skill and seasonal workers from Eastern Europe from entering Britain – the likely effect could be the collapse of our National Health Service and the food supply chain'. Since then we have as a nation begun to recognise what has been blatantly obvious to me that these very people are key to the health and prosperity of our country. An attempt to recruit British workers unemployed as a result of the pandemic into seasonal jobs fell flat on its face partly because the work was too physically demanding and partly because of availability restrictions. Finally around 200 volunteers from Romania were flown in to help fill the gap. As a nation relying increasingly on service and high-tech for its employment, we were just not up to the job. With more statistics available it has highlighted the fact that the less well off are more likely to suffer the viral disease – understandable living in less spacious, less desirable dwellings; and also that those of African and South-Asian descent are more prone to infection. This latter fact in a way confirms that people from these areas are, generally, more likely to suffer serious illness from such infections. As a result of the pandemic, AEC activities throughout Europe have been cancelled or put on hold. Some sections managed to get in their Annual general Meetings

before the lockdown but others are deferring them with existing committees continuing on an ad-hoc basis. Sadly the Italian section seems to have a confused situation with differences of opinion between different regional groups. But whatever the outcome, the parties are agreed on remaining part of our European family. It has also been agreed that the proposed programme of European Days should be put back one year, with a formal virtually unchanged programme now available for an event in Sofia, Bulgaria in May 2021. This programme will be found in following pages. The original price has been maintained and 80% refunds are available for those who booked for 2020 but cannot attend in 2021. Likewise, FEANDC has postponed its 2020 Congress in Lugano (CH) until 2021, with a similar programme, the original having been only an outline anyway. For the British section, our AGM and European weekend had to be cancelled and those who wished to attend have received full refunds. The committee will continue in office as caretaker until an Annual general Meeting can be arranged in safety maybe this year, possibly next. As a result, this issue will have a different balance of material, which I hope you will find interesting

As I write, Europe Day is three days away. The village in which I live is festooned with Union Jacks because we are also a few days away from VE Day, for which, of course 'celebrations' have had to be put on hold. I find the idea of 'celebration' of such events distasteful, to put it mildly. By all means we should commemorate such events, but to celebrate the anniversaries of 'victory' seems to me perilously close to gloating. Whilst I would not wish to deny the utter badness of the Nazi regime, I think contemplation and learning lessons are more appropriate, particularly considering that 'we' did not 'win' the war without the enormous sacrifices of other nations; one of which we no longer consider to be a friend! But in view of the events of recent years, do the British view anyone as friends? Do we have an inbuilt hostility because we are an island nation? On the other hand more than 150,000 people have signed petitions appealing to Boris Johnson to extend the Brexit transition period because of the coronavirus epidemic. Something of a sign of solidarity. But I was impressed to learn of a news story that serves as a reminder of what the European project is fundamentally about - collaboration, community and working together. All over Europe, countries are sending their surplus PPE, medical and cleaning supplies, and even medical staff to countries with the greatest need in this crisis. The kitchen in the EU Parliament has even been transformed to make over 1,000 meals a day for those in need! EU solidarity is quite literally saving lives.. We await with bated breath what the future will bring. But we can be sure that the world will be changed for ever; and possibly with a reduction in the environmental damage being caused by 'advanced civilisation'. Maybe nature is telling us something if we have ears to hear - says someone who is deaf!

Philip Worsfold

*(The views expressed are personal and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Association.)*

#### **Reminders.**

**Again a reminder that the British section website is now up and running at [www.aec-europe.co.uk](http://www.aec-europe.co.uk) It will be a source of up to date information, so please use it regularly. Jenny Worsfold is the webmaster and material for insertion should be sent to her as an e-mail attachment.**

#### **Recruitment**

Nigel Hyde has been elected as Treasurer and membership Secretary as well as Recruitment Officer. Any ideas you have should be channelled through him. All enquiries about membership should be addressed to **Nigel Hyde. Please note telephone number and e-mail addresses on page 2.**

## **PEOPLE**

### **Roger Owen**

It saddens me to have to record the death of member Roger Owen. He had been a member since 1993 but was not active. He paid his subscription regularly and received his newsletter by post to the end. But what is so sad is that nobody I have asked knew anything about him. If there is a member out there who remembers Roger Owen, will he please get in touch with the editor, so that justice may be done to his memory.

### **John Hayward**

Despite his health problems, John has been as active as present circumstances permit and an ardent correspondent. We have him to thank for helping to fill pages in this edition that might otherwise have been filled with boring items like programmes!!!

### **Joe von Ruhland**

Long standing members will remember Joe von Ruhland. His children have now informed John Woods of the passing on 2<sup>nd</sup> April of his widow, Anne, who we had met occasionally.

### **Robert Gelekum.**

Horst Vanselow tells us that Robert is still mentally alert; but living now in sheltered accommodation near his home in Germany, since he needs help with his physical needs.

## **TRANSPORT AND TRAVEL NEWS**

### **HOME NEWS**

#### **High Speed 2 Notice to proceed issued. (Railway Gazette)**

On April 15 the Department for Transport gave project promoter HS2 Ltd approval to issue its four main works civils contractors with Notice to Proceed with full detailed design and construction of the 225 km London – West Midlands Phase 1 of the high speed network.

NtP marks formal approval for the launch of the construction phase, and the point at which contractors SCS Railways, Align JV, EKFB JV and BBV JV transition from scheme design and preparatory work to full detailed design and construction.

'Following the decision earlier this year to proceed with the project, this next step provides thousands of construction workers and businesses across the country with certainty at a time when they need it, and means that work can truly begin on delivering this transformational project', said HS2 Minister Andrew Stephenson.

#### **Full business case**

DfT has also published the full business case for High Speed 2 Phase 1, setting out the strategic, economic, financial, commercial and management rationale for the project, building on the outline business case published in 2013.

This puts the cost of Phase 1 at £35bn to £45bn, including contingency. Passenger services between Old Oak Common and Birmingham Curzon Street are expected to start between 2029 and 2033, with full Phase 1 services from London Euston to start in 2031-36.

Phase 1 has a central-case benefit-cost ratio of 1.2:1, including wider economic impacts. The full Y-shaped network comprising phases 1, 2a and 2b, has a BCR of 1.5:1 including wider economic impacts. However, the business case says that until information is available on the potential impact of Covid-19 on long-term demand and economic growth, 'it is not possible to say whether this will materially impact the value for money of HS2'.

### Boost to the construction industry

HS2 Ltd CEO Mark Thurston said NtP was ‘both an immediate boost to the construction industry – and the many millions of UK jobs that the industry supports – and an important investment in Britain’s future: levelling up the country, improving our transport network and changing the way we travel to help bring down carbon emissions and improve air quality for the next generation’.

He said ‘HS2 has been over 10 years in development and design. While the country’s focus is rightly on defeating Covid-19, the issuing of Notice to Proceed today ensures that our contractors and their supply chains have the confidence that they can commit to building HS2, generating thousands of skilled jobs across the country as we recover from the pandemic.’

HS2 Ltd estimates that Phase 1 will create 400 000 supply chain contract opportunities, of which around 95% would be won by UK-based businesses, with around two-thirds of these being SMEs.

The High Speed Rail Group welcomed the NtP announcement. ‘At a time when the country is facing such enormous challenges, this is very welcome news’, said director Will Roberts ‘We must continue to look to the long-term, and there is no project which will do more to transform the long-term prospects of UK plc than HS2.’

Roberts said ‘a small army of 11 000 people is already working to make HS2 a reality – and that number will rise to 15 000 this year and 30 000 in the longer term, including 2 000 apprentices.’

### HS2 Phase 1 Main Works Civil Engineering Contracts

| Contractor   | Joint venture members   | Value  | Scope   |
|--------------|---|--------|---|
| SCS Railways | Skanska Construction UK Ltd, Costain Ltd, Strabag   | £3.3bn | Euston Tunnels and Approaches, Northolt Tunnels   |
| Align JV     | Bouygues Travaux Publics, Sir Robert McAlpine, VolkerFitzpatrick  | £1.6bn | Chiltern Tunnels and Colne Valley Viaduct   |
| EKFB JV      | Eiffage Genie Civil, Kier Infrastructure & Overseas Ltd, BAM Nuttall, Ferrovial Agroman                             | £2.3bn | North Portal Chiltern Tunnels to Brackley, Brackley to South Portal of Long Itchington Wood Green Tunnel                                    |
| BBV JV       | Balfour Beatty Group, VINCI Construction Grands Projets, VINCI Construction UK Ltd, VINCI Construction Terrassement | £4.8bn | Long Itchington Wood Green Tunnel to Delta Junction and Birmingham Spur, Delta Junction to West Coast Main Line Tie-In (Handsacre Junction) |

Darren Caplan, Chief Executive of the Railway Industry Association, said HS2 was a 'truly transformational project' for the economy and connectivity, which would 'create thousands of jobs and spur investment, at a time when the UK will be looking at how it can recover economically from this coronavirus outbreak'.

Eamon O'Hearn, National Officer at the GMB union which represents HS2 construction workers and those in the wider supply chain, said 'HS2 is a project of national importance but the safety of its workforce, and supply chain, must be the overriding priority. Construction should be conditional on rigorous observation of social distancing, provision of personal protective equipment where required, individualised risk assessments for workers with underlying conditions, and mandatory dialogue between contractors of all levels and recognised unions.'

## **NEWS FROM EUROPE**

### **New railway line between Bettembourg and Luxembourg to be completed in 2024**

© Domingos Oliveira (RTL)

(Francis Breuer of FEANDC sent us this item)

Seven kilometres in length, the line will pass six bridges, one of which is for wildlife.

The construction started in January 2016 and will last until December 2024.

The aim is to lighten the use of the existing line between Bettembourg and Luxembourg City.

The TER (Express regional transport), as well as the TGV (high speed train) will be using this new section. The speed limit will be 160 km/h.

### **Sabotage or lack of Maintenance?**

#### **ICE high-speed line between Cologne and Frankfurt airport closed.**

In the early morning hours of March 20, 2020, on the ICE route between Frankfurt am Main and Cologne at the Tisza Valley Bridge near Niedernhausen, it was found that the rail fastenings on the tracks were loosened over a distance of approx. 80 metres. Railway traffic was immediately blocked on this route. During a line inspection, the damage to the track systems was discovered. Previously, several trains had passed over this route. Fortunately, there was no damage to trains or passengers.

Under the auspices of the public prosecutor's office in Frankfurt am Main, the State Criminal Police Office in Hesse is investigating the background and the cause of the damage to the railway line. There is close cooperation with the federal police. Later that day, the police were carrying out extensive forensic measures and were searching the area with the help of a police helicopter, among other things. Another focus of the measures is concerning security. The investigations are being carried out in all directions as a possible sabotage attempt cannot be ruled out.

Witnesses who have concerns about suspicious activities in the vicinity of the railway line are asked to contact the police, although they ask people to avoid speculation and not to participate in rumours.

Due to the police investigations on the ICE line near Breckenheim, long-distance traffic of Deutsche Bahn between Frankfurt am Main airport and Cologne was impaired. Trains had to be rerouted and many were delayed by about 90 minutes. The Limburg Süd, Montabaur, Siegburg / Bonn and Cologne / Bonn Airport stops could not be served and replacement stops were made at Koblenz Hbf, Bonn Hbf and Bonn-Beuel. by certain trains.

*This article is based on a press release by West Hesse (railway) Police Headquarters, Wiesbaden, Deutsche Bahn.*

## **GUIDANCE ON HOW TO SAFELY AND GRADUALLY RESTORE TRANSPORT SERVICES ACROSS THE EU**

On Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> June, the European Commission presented its Tourism and Transport package of guidelines and recommendations to help Member States



gradually lift travel restrictions and allow tourism businesses to reopen while respecting health precautions. The guidelines present general principles as well as specific recommendations for air, rail, road and waterborne transport, covering – for example – limiting contact between passengers and transport workers - and passengers themselves, reducing, where feasible, the passenger density, and the use of personal protective equipment such as face masks. The package also includes a recommendation on making travel vouchers an attractive alternative to cash reimbursement for consumers.

### **AIR FRANCE ORDERED TO CURB COMPETITION WITH RAIL IN FRANCE**

by David Briginshaw (Rail Journal)

May 1, 2020

One of three conditions imposed on Air France in exchange for a €7bn coronavirus aid package is that it will stop competing with TGV services where rail offers a viable alternative. Air France will have to reduce competition with TGV services in France in exchange for a €7bn aid package.

“I want to reiterate that this support for Air France is not a blank cheque,” France’s economy and finance minister, Mr Bruno Le Maire, told the Economic Affairs Committee of the National Assembly on April 29.

The ban on short-haul domestic air travel will apply to routes where trains offer a journey time of 2h 30min or less. This means Air France will no longer be able to sell tickets for domestic travel on flights between Paris and Bordeaux, Lyon, Nantes or Rennes. Only passengers using these flights to connect with flights to other destinations will be allowed to travel by air.

“The plane should no longer be a means of transporting [people] in one hour or one hour 15 minutes which could be done at lower cost of CO2 by train in two hours or two hours 30,” Le Marie told BFM TV. “This must be the rule and we will enforce it.” Le Marie wants Air France to be more profitable, more competitive, and the most environmentally friendly airline. Air France will have to reduce its CO2 emissions per passenger-km by 50% between 2005 and 2030 and cut CO2 emissions on its short-haul flights by 50% by the end 2024. Air France will also have to reach target of using 2% of its fuel from sustainable sources by 2025.

*On seeing this report, a friend abroad commented:*

*“What a great idea. Now they’ve got to let the SNCF operate all the rail services, so they don’t waste money on having multiple corporations with large overheads have to reinvent the wheel for billing, accounting, selling tickets, etc. Anyone ever heard of single provider?”*

*“Meanwhile, our [U.S.] government bails out the airlines without forcing them to make any consumer-oriented improvements.”*

### **...And also on the topic of saving the planet...**

I had already found an article about the possible resurgence of sleeping car trains to replace business flying, but the following report that John Woods found in a Financial Times editorial in February 2020 is more succinct.

### **SLEEPER TRAINS CAN DRIVE CLEANER BUSINESS TRAVEL.**

#### **Services can have several advantages over flying for short haul travel.**

Sleeper trains still smack of luxury travel even a decade after the last descendent of the original Orient Express ceased running; all sublime vistas, opulent settings and murder mysteries. But a Vienna to Brussels night service unveiled in February gives hope that Europe’s sleepers might mount a comeback in the age of *Flygskam* – flight shame.

While many European rail operators cut their sleeper services over the past decade, Austria’s ÖBB has expanded its *Nightjet* service linking cities including Hamburg, Basel and Innsbruck. In Sweden the government is considering running trains from Malmo to London. And in the UK the Anglo-Scottish Caledonian Sleeper put £150M into new stock which was unveiled last year, albeit without hiccups.

The expansion of cheap air travel from the 1980's onwards has been blamed for the pressure on night trains. As environmental concerns have grown, the consumer calculus appears to have shifted. Commercial aviation was responsible for about 2% of man-made carbon dioxide emissions last year according to the International Air Transport Association. In response Activists such as Greta Thunberg have called on travellers to shun the airwaves. The Malmo to London proposal is one such effort to reduce emissions.

For business travellers these services have an appeal beyond ESG concerns. With a sleeper, they can attend late-night meetings, hop into a berth, and arrive refreshed in a new city – a welcome break from early morning flights, long security queues and tedious baggage carousels. Sleeper trains also have advantages over daytime trains offering a chance to rest without forking out for a hotel.

The return of the sleeper is not necessarily a smooth ride. For intercontinental journeys complex combinations of trains are unlikely to convince travellers to ditch the convenience of aircraft. Loyalty schemes and cut-price sales are strong incentives to keep flying within Europe, particularly if train tickets are costly. The solution to this problem could lie in pricing aircraft emissions more fairly, rather than throwing subsidies at operators. At the same time, the quality of rest that sleeper trains afford business travellers will have to rise to match the best airlines' business class.

Regardless of these challenges, the expansion of night train routes is a reminder that those who are designing the future of transport do not need to reinvent the wheel. Prototypes of mobility in 2050 often stray into the costly realms of science fiction – from Tesla chief executive Elon Musk's Hyperloop vacuum tube train to Samsung's imagined underwater highways. A carbon neutral world will require radical changes in how we move around. In the meantime the tracks are laid for the new golden age of the sleeper.

To which a certain Simon Hope (*a pseudonym if I am not mistaken – Ed.*) of Norwich referred to the editorial, writing:

**Couchettes may be the key to making sleeper services affordable.**

It is welcome news that sleeper trains could make a comeback in Europe. Certainly it is important to promote them for business travel; but equally important is the leisure and tourist market. Couchettes (four- or six-berth) for people not able to afford the full sleeper may be the train companies' key to the economic viability of this type of train.

Clearly, to offer a better service than airlines, cheap and simple fares and avoiding complex train connections are essential; but advance information – publicity and timetables – is another prerequisite. Perhaps other incentives will be necessary to attract more passengers onto night trains – hotel and night train packages for example, making journeys even cheaper and simple, also a complete redesign of couchette coaches for more privacy and convenience...

**NOTES ON KING'S CROSS AND ST PANCRAS INTERNATIONAL STATIONS,  
REGENT'S CANAL AND THE SURROUNDING AREA**

**John Hayward**

16.04.2020. 2<sup>nd</sup> revision 01.05.2020

The King's Cross and adjacent St Pancras stations are full of history as is the Regent's Canal that passes through the area. All have seen many changes, especially in recent years.

The first station at King's Cross was a temporary one (next to the subsequent site of the Granary building) and was later replaced by the present station. The history of this original station goes back to 1849 when plans were being developed for a Great Exhibition in Hyde Park during 1851. No railway wanted to lose out on the bonanza of passenger traffic that this would bring and, while the Great Northern Railway had planned a great station building at King's Cross, there were delays in buying up the

land. Facing a diminishing timeline, the railway company built this small station as a temporary measure on Maiden Lane, just to the north of the present King's Cross. Incidentally, Maiden Lane is now called York Way, and the original name 'Maiden Lane' comes from a corruption of the word 'midden', a dung heap!

After less than a year of construction work, the new terminus station opened to passengers on the 7th August 1850, although it would appear that the construction hadn't been fully completed, with complaints about the unfinished glazing still being made several months later. It may have been just a temporary station, but that didn't deter Queen Victoria from using it – once – when taking a trip to Scotland.

The station served passengers throughout the Great Exhibition, but construction work of its eventual replacement was now underway – the second King's Cross station, which eventually opened on 14th October 1852.

Within days of the switchover of buildings, the original station had been converted into a wholesale potato market and warehouses, which actually turned out to be hugely successful, and within a couple of years, another series of temporary buildings clustered around the old station building to cope with traffic. Eventually, it became a freight depot which lasted in service until March 1973.



A contemporary picture of the first station.

The area in which the station is situated was originally named Battlebridge as it is believed to be the location of the legendary battle between Queen Boudicca (Boadicea) and Roman invaders. The story goes that the final resting place of Boudicca, the British, warrior queen of the Iceni, is under Platform 9 at King's Cross Station. She ended up there following her last battle with the Romans in AD 61. The battle took place at Broad Ford, in the valley between King's Cross and St Pancras. Broad Ford was the place to cross the Fleet river and according to tradition it became Battle Bridge, following Boudicca's defeat.

Platform 9 was later made famous as platform 9¾ in J.K.Rowling's 'Harry Potter' books with its disappearing luggage trolley. The latter has now been moved into the Western departures concourse and still attracts hordes of visitors wanting to be photographed beside it. At busy times, a marshal is employed to control the crowds and there is a Platform 9¾ souvenir shop adjacent, attracting even bigger crowds..

*[Editor's note – platform numbers have been changed both before and following the construction of the Western departures concourse.]*

Following the opening of the Regents Canal in 1820, the area became industrialised. In a move to raise the rather tarnished image of the area, a statue of King George IV

was erected at the Battle Bridge crossroads in 1830. The statue attracted ridicule and was demolished in 1842, but the new name for the area – ‘King’s Cross’ – stuck. Sadly by the 1960s the whole area around King’s Cross and St Pancras stations had become very run down. The decline of the area had started after the end of WW2 from being a poor but busy industrial and distribution services district to a partially abandoned post-industrial wasteland.

At about that time, British Railways proposed to demolish St Pancras station and divert the remaining trains into King’s Cross and Euston. Fortunately, a vigorous campaign led by the late Sir John Betjeman and the Victorian Society forced BR to abandon these plans in December, 1968.

The area continued to decline and became notorious for prostitution and drug abuse with seedy hotels and many vacant premises in the area. This reputation impeded attempts to revive the area and utilise the large amount of land available following the closure of industrial premises and the abandonment of railway goods yards to the west and north of the stations.

Plans for the regeneration of the area began to emerge in the 1990s. The site of the former Somers Town Goods Yard, west of St Pancras station, which had closed in 1968, was chosen for new British Library, opened by the Queen in 1998. At about this time, the decision was made to make St Pancras the terminus of the new High Speed Line (HS1) linking London with the Channel Tunnel. Following the reconstruction of St Pancras station and the opening of the HS1 through to the station in 2007, the redevelopment of the lands between, and north of, the two major stations, and lands to the rear, really took off.

Known as the King’s Cross Railway Lands development, the 67-acre site has a rich history and a unique setting. It is now one of the largest construction projects in Greater London in the first quarter of the 21st century and is being transformed into a new part of the city with homes, shops, offices, galleries, bars, restaurants, schools, and even a university. More than 20 historic buildings and structures are also being restored. This has led to King’s Cross being named as “One of England’s 20 Best Heritage-Led Developments” by English Heritage. The development also includes the creation of 26 acres of open space, with fountains and trees, in what were partly inaccessible backlands. All of the "socially undesirable" behaviour has moved on, and the renaissance of the area has been truly remarkable.

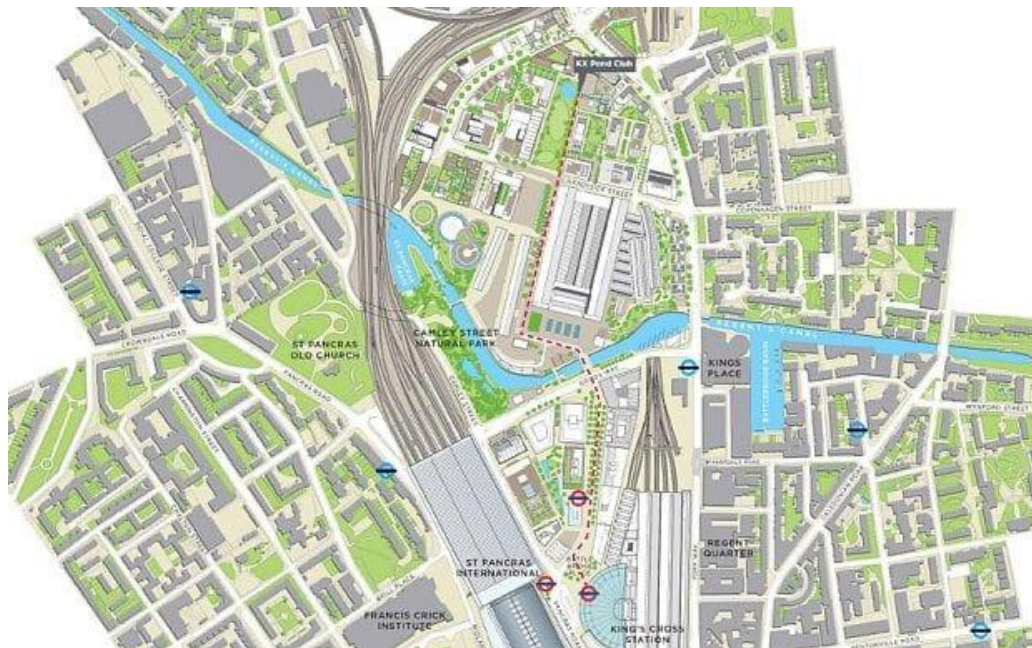
The Central Saint Martins art college moved into the old Granary building in 2011. Originally, designed in 1852 by Lewis Cubitt, the architect of King’s Cross station, the Granary once stored wheat for London’s bakers. The six-storey Granary building was also served by two canal basins underneath, built by Great Northern Railway Company, using two short branch links off the nearby Regent’s Canal from where barges were unloaded. These conveyed timber, building materials and coal to King’s Cross from the industrial north. They also brought fruit to marmalade makers, beer to bottlers and grain to a flour mill, where Kings Place now stands off York Way, and even carried ice from Norwegian glaciers to Carlo Gatti’s ice house – now home to the nearby London Canal Museum in Battlebridge Basin.

Other canal branches ended at the transit sheds on either side of the Granary, where cargo could be taken directly onto horse drawn wagons for distribution. All this became part of a freight depot complex which closed in March 1973. The building has been impressively restored as the new home for this prestigious art college.

On the west side of St Pancras International station is the impressive Francis Crick Institute, which is a biomedical research centre and built behind the British Library. It was opened in 2016 and has 1,500 staff, including 1,250 scientists, and an annual budget of over £100 million, making it the biggest single biomedical laboratory in Europe.

In 2018, construction on the first, wholly owned and designed Google building outside the US commenced on the King’s Cross lands development. This purpose-built 11-storey building is designed by the Heatherwick Studio and Bjarke Ingels

Group (BIG) and combined with the current building at 6 Pancras Square plus an additional third building, will create a Google office building complex with the potential to house 7,000 of their employees.



Plan of the redevelopment site. St Pancras station centre left, Kings Cross centre right. The Regent's Canal in blue crosses from top left to middle right.

Earlier, plans were being developed to upgrade King's Cross station which involved removing a single-storey extension containing the main passenger concourse and ticket office, designed in house, that had been built at the front of the station in 1972. Although intended to be temporary, it was still standing 40 years later and was obscuring the Grade 1 listed façade of the original station. A £500 million restoration plan, announced by Network Rail in 2005, was approved by the local council in 2007. This involved restoring and re-glazing the original arched train shed roof as well as creating a spectacular new semi-circular departures concourse on the west side of the station. This was opened to the public in March 2012 and it is claimed that its roof is the longest single-span station structure in Europe and has a radius of 54 metres (59 yards) and more than 2,000 triangular roof panels, half of which are glass. This new Western departures concourse allowed the 1972 extension buildings to be demolished in late 2012, thus revealing the Lewis Cubitt architecture of 1852. In their place, a 75,000-square-foot plaza, known as King's Cross Square, was created and opened to the public in 2013.

When I worked at St Pancras station in the late 1960s both that and King's Cross station were in poor state with their neglected structures and glass roofs were blackened by years of soot and grime. Their facilities were tired and limited and there was nothing much to detain passing travellers, unless you were a train spotter! Today, both stations have much to offer with good quality facilities ranging from shops, restaurants, bars, etc and each with an adjacent restored hotel. In fact, St Pancras International station with its up market shops, restaurants and magnificent architecture, including the restored Barlow train shed, has become a destination in its own right which is popular with visitors to London. The St Pancras single span train shed roof, at 240ft wide, was the largest in the world at the time of construction in 1867.

As mentioned earlier, the Regent's Canal passes through the area. The 8.6 mile long canal provides a link from the Paddington Arm of the Grand Union Canal, 550 yards north-west of Paddington Basin in the west, to the Limehouse Basin and the River

Thames in east London. It was first proposed in 1802 and received impetus in 1811 when a plan was produced to redevelop a large area of central north London. As a result, the Regent's Canal was included in the scheme, running for part of its distance along the northern edge of Regent's Park.

Work began on 14th October 1812. The first section from Paddington to Camden Town opened in 1816 and included a 250metre (274 yd) long tunnel under Maida Hill east of an area now known as 'Little Venice' (which is behind Paddington station), and a much shorter tunnel, just 47metre (52 yds) long, under Lisson Grove. The Camden to Limehouse section, including the 969 yd long Islington tunnel and the Regent's Canal Dock (used to transfer cargo from seagoing vessels to canal barges – today known as Limehouse Basin), opened four years later on 1st August 1820. Various intermediate basins were also constructed including ones at the St. Pancras Stone and Coal Basin and at the Battlebridge Basin (close to Kings Cross station). In addition, there were spurs from the canal into the former Granary buildings area, as mentioned earlier.

Interestingly, the lines into St Pancras International station cross over the canal whereas, just a short distance to the east, the canal crosses over the railway out of King's Cross. Here, it crosses the south end of the 540metre (594 yard) long Gasworks Tunnels consisting of three bores. The eastern bore was abandoned during the spring of 1977. Network Rail are currently working on a project to reopen this latter bore as part of its 'King's uncrossed' scheme under which the tracks and signalling into and out of the station are being remodelled to reduce congestion and improve the movement of trains. This will involve re-instating two tracks through the eastern bore thus increasing capacity from four to six tracks on the approaches to the station. The tunnels take their name from Copenhagen Fields, an open space directly above the tunnels, that was once the location of the Ambassador of Denmark's residence in the 17th century. It later became a popular pleasure garden and a public meeting area.

There are 13 locks and all the locks were originally built with duplicate chambers to facilitate the heavy barge traffic. During the mid to late 19th century the canal survived several proposals to convert parts, or all, of it into railways. The main traffic was principally coal and building materials. These were goods that were being shipped locally, in contrast to the canal's original purpose of trans-shipping imports to the Midlands but that had been lost to the railways. With the growth of the movement of freight by road, from the 1920s onwards, the canal fell into a long decline. After WW2 most of the UK canal system had also declined and had become unprofitable, with some canals being closed and filled in. The harsh winter of 1962-3 saw Regent's Canal freeze so hard that no cargo could move on it for weeks. By the time the thaw came, most of the freight traffic had been transferred to road, never to return. Fortunately, government began to recognise that the canals had a value for the increasing popular leisure use. Under the Transport Act, 1962, a state run organisation known as British Waterways was set up and this, of course, included the Regent's Canal.

The final demise of commercial traffic on the Regent's Canal was in the early 1970s. So, at the end of 1973, the British Waterways Board embarked on a three year programme to convert one chamber at each lock into an overflow weir to facilitate unmanned use by pleasure craft without the risk of serious flooding due to incorrect use of the paddles.

Since then, the UK canal system has become increasingly popular for leisure activities such as boating and cruising holidays, etc. There are also groups of volunteers around the UK working on restoring previously closed canals and this work is ongoing with some of it now gaining local government support.

On 2nd July, 2012, the government offloaded the responsibility for the historic waterways in England and Wales to the Canal & River Trust and British Waterways ceased to exist.

The new organisation is a charitable trust which is responsible for 2,000 miles of canals, rivers, docks and reservoirs, along with museums, archives and the country's third largest collection of protected historic buildings.

The Regent's Canal has become fashionable for pleasure cruising and its towpaths are now popular with walkers as well as with cyclists, especially those commuting to and from work, as they avoid some of the city's busiest roads.

In addition, a regular water bus service operates between Little Venice and Camden, running hourly during the summer months. It previously only operated between Little Venice and Regent's Park zoo.

## **EUROPEAN DAYS AND OTHER EVENTS**

### **Dates of European Events.**

**AEC European Days in Bulgaria (Sofia) 2021** organised by the Romanian section 16/17<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2021 Existing bookings stand or may be cancelled. For new bookings see detailed programme on page See programme on page 12 Booking is open until 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020..**NOTE CHANGED DATES**

**French section 'Sortie à Nice', postponed to 2021.**

**The Spanish section proposed European Days in Madrid/Toledo for May 2022** (postponed from 2021).

**Proposed AEC European Days in Poland 2023** – postponed from 2022.

**56th European Congress of FEANDC 2021** in Lugano (CH) - see preliminary programme on page 17.

### **Items from the German Section Calendar.**

The German section calendar is in suspense pending the outcome of the pandemic.

## **PROGRAMME FOR EUROPEAN DAYS IN SOFIA – CAPITAL OF BULGARIA FROM 16/17 TO 22 MAY 2020 – NOTE CHANGED DATES**

### **Organized by the Romanian Section (and Bulgarian Section) of AEC**

#### **Sunday : 16 May 2021**

- 08.00-24.00 – Arrival of participants at the European days of the AEC.  
Transfer from the train station and from international airport of Sofia.  
Accommodation at Hotel Rila \*\*\* located just 50 meters from the main shopping street of Sofia, equipped with restaurant, terrace, conference room, bar, etc.
- 19.00-23.00 - Dinner at the restaurant.

#### **Monday : 17 May 2021**

- 07.00-09.00 – Breakfast
- 09.00-13.00 - Administrative Council meeting in the conference room of the hotel.
- 13.00-15.00 – Lunch in the hotel's restaurant.
- 15.30-18.00 - Meeting of General Assembly and election of the new European Bureau AEC.
- For other participants, take the program relax by the pool or stroll through the historic center.  
18.30-22.00 - Official opening of the European Days of the AEC. Festive dinner with music, dance and a folklore programme with a Bulgarian flavour at a restaurant in the area.

**Tuesday: 18 May 2021**

- 07.00-09.30 - Breakfast
- 10.00-13.00 – Tour of the city of Sofia with a visit to the Cathedral Alexander Nevski, St. Sophia Church, Sfantu Gheorghe Church, the Royal Palace and the National Theatre Ivan Vazov.
- 13.30-15.30 - Lunch at a restaurant in the city.
- 16.00-19.00 – Continue to the city and visit the National Park Mount Vitosha, the oldest natural park on the Balkan Peninsula, visible from almost all parts of Sofia.
- 19.30-21.30 - Dinner at a restaurant in the central area.

**Wednesday: 19 May 2021**

- 07.00-09.00 - Breakfast at the hotel.
- 09.30-12.30 - Visit the Krakra Fortress and the Pernik Mining Museum (35km)
- 13.00-15.00 - Lunch at a restaurant in the Rila Nature Park (95km).
- 15.30-18.00 - Visit to Rila Monastery, the largest Orthodox monastery in the Balkans. Return to Sofia.
- 19.30-21.30 - Dinner at a restaurant in the central area.

**Thursday : 20 May 2021**

- 07.00 - Packed breakfast. Bus departure in the centre of Bulgaria – about 200 km.
- 10.30 -12.00 - Visit Arbanasi - the oldest village in Bulgaria, in fact a mini architectural jewel.
- 12.30 – 14.00 – Lunch at Sevastokrator Restaurant in Arbanasi.
- 14.30 – 16.00 – visiting Veliko Tarnovo - the former medieval capital of Bulgaria
- 16.30 - Travel to Sofia.
- 20.30 – Dinner at one restaurant in Central Sofia.

**Friday : 21 May 2021**

- 07.00-09.00 - Breakfast at the hotel.
- 09.30-12.00 -.Visit to the City Hall in Sofia and the Headquarters of the Bulgarian Railways.
- 12.30-14.30 - Lunch at a restaurant in Sofia.
- 15.00-18.00 - Free time for shopping and relaxation.
- 18.30-22.00 - The official closing of the European Railway Days - AEC - with music, dance and a special artistic programme at a restaurant in the area.

**Saturday : 22 May 2021**

- 07.00-09.00 - Breakfast at the hotel.  
Departure of participants. Transfer to the railway station or the airport.

**ESTIMATED COSTS :**

1. From May 17 (festive dinner) until May 22 (breakfast) – **525 euro**.
2. From May 16 (dinner) until May 22(breakfast) – **595 euro**.
3. From May16 (dinner) until May 18(breakfast) – **180 euro**.
4. Supplement Single room - **20 euro** / night.

The programme includes accommodation in **Hotel Rila \*\*\***, full board including drinks for lunch and dinner, bus transport, tour guide with guide, entry to objectives and transfers from the station or airport.



Registration with deposit of 200euros per person (or full payment if less) open until 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020. Final payment due before 15<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

Euro account: **RO19 BRDE 240 SV 265 2520 2400** ; Swift Code: **BRDEROBU**  
Beneficiary: **ECO NET CONSULTING SRL Iasi Romania**  
For the action: **AEC - SOFIA 16 / 17 – 22 May 2021**

Below are the details of the postponed FEANDC Congress, now to be held in 2021. But please be aware of the dates of AEC European Days in Sofia in late May 2021.

**FÉDÉRATION EUROPÉENNE DES AMICALES NATIONALES DES DIRIGEANTS DE CHEMINS DE FER – SECTION SUISSE**

Europäische Freundschaftsvereinigung der Leiter von Diensten der Bahnen – Sektion SCHWEIZ  
Federazione Europea delle Amicali Nazionali dei Dirigenti di Ferrovie – Sezione SVIZZERA

Congress 2020 in Lugano becomes  
**Congress 2021 in Lugano.**

Dear Presidents of the National Associations

Due to the still very unsafe situation: at the beginning of June the restaurants in Switzerland and in Italy may not open again and the ships, mountain railways may not be in operation, so .....?

**we are forced to postpone Congress until 2021.**

The program remains the same:

- Arrival on Wednesday, **June 9, 2021**
- Excursion to Ponte Tresa, **Thursday June 10, 2021**
- Excursion to Monte Generoso on **Friday, June 11, 2021**
- Official day on Saturday, **June 12, 2021**
- Excursion to the Verzasca Valley on **Sunday, June 13, 2021**
- Departure on Monday, **June 14, 2021**

Participants registered for the cancelled Congress 2020 will receive a personal letter. You remain registered for 2021.

Since it is possible that some friends of the European Union have not registered for Congress 2020 due to scheduling conflicts, we would like to give them the opportunity to register for Congress 2021.

We will send you registration forms again.

**IN THE INTERESTS OF EUROPEAN HARMONY...**

I offer you the following, translated from an article in French (except where the French must remain) sent to me by Pierre Laberny. I have added my own comments in italics. I think it unlikely that he got it from L'Express Quotidien or La Poste Quotidienne. But on the other hand...

**You learn something truly EXCELLENT and cultural every day** – like this story about Louis XIV.

It all started in January 1696, when Louis suddenly fell ill.

It seemed that he had sat on a feather from the stuffing of a cushion which was an accessory to the furnishings of his coach. It caused an abscess on his anus, which needed immediate incision to avoid the wound becoming infected.

But the King's doctors, fearful of the idea of touching the monarch's bottom, opted for gentle unguent medicines. These methods gave no relief. All this lasted four months and the royal pain was incessant! Finally, about 15th May, the surgeons, green with fear, suspected the presence of an abnormal growth. This caused immediate general panic. Finally the first surgeon, Félix de Tassy (known simply as FELIX), decided to operate; and "invented" a special little knife; truly a piece of jewellery of which the blade was plated with silver.

But it took another five months to get this little jewel made.

The operation took place on 17<sup>th</sup> November – without anaesthetic and two further incisions were necessary (the wound being too large to form a scar) and at last, by Christmas it was possible to declare that the King had definitely recovered from his malady; and put an end to the rumours that were being promulgated abroad that the King was at death's door. As soon as the happy conclusion to the surgery was known, prayers were offered throughout the kingdom and the Sisters of St Cyr (founded by Mme De Maintenon, who had become the King's morganatic wife) decided to compose a canticle to celebrate the King's recovery. The Mother-superior, Mme de Brinon (niece of Mme de Maintenon) wrote several soothing verses, which she gave to Jean-Baptiste Lully to set to music. *She must have had a direct line to heaven, since Lully had died in 1687, although there is a record of other posthumous collaborations on his part...*

Grand Dieu sauve le roi !  
Longs jours à notre roi !  
Vive le roi. A lui victoire,  
Bonheur et gloire !  
Qu'il ait un règne heureux  
Et l'appui des cieux !

It became a habit for the Sisters of Saint Cyr to sing their little canticle whenever the King visited their little school (*presumably where those of his children born out of wedlock were educated*).

It was in 1714 that the composer Georg Friedrich Händel, (*or it might have been Thomas Augustine Arne; but we won't argue about that*) passing by way of Versailles, heard the canticle and found it so beautiful that he immediately wrote down the words and the music. Once he had returned to London, he contacted a clergyman called Carrey (*well known for his opera librettos*) and asked him to translate into English Mme de Brinon's little couplet. The worthy clergyman obliged quickly and wrote down these words that have resounded around the world.

God save our gracious King,  
Long life our noble King,  
God save the King!  
Send him victorious  
Happy and glorious  
Long to reign over us,  
God save the King !

Handel thanked him and went immediately to court, where he (*or was it Arne*) presented the canticle of the Sisters of Saint Cyr as if it were his own work. Very flattered, King George I congratulated the composer and decided that from then on "God save the King" would be performed at all official ceremonies.

So it was that this national hymn, which seems to us so British, is really collaboration:  
- of a Frenchwoman (Mme de Brinon),  
- an Italian (Jean-Baptiste Lully -or Lulli-) naturalised Frenchman, (*deceased*)  
- an Englishman (Carrey),  
- and a German (Georg Friedrich Händel -or Handel-) naturalised British (*or maybe not him*)  
and a problem with His Majesty King Louis XIV's bottom (*he was French*); for a *British King who himself was a (welcome) immigrant from Germany!*

A European Anthem, in fact.

If Louis XIV hadn't by misfortune got a feather stuck in his bottom, what would be Britain's National Anthem today ?!

Think about that little feather whenever you hear "God save the Queen"

*Let's face it; we Brits are a bit coy about the origins of our National Anthem. If you look it up in 'Hymns Ancient and Modern – the New Standard edition of 1983 is the most forthcoming – you will find the words are 'anonymous' and the tune attributed to 'Thesaurus Musicus' of 1743 – rather later than the events described above. One thing we do know, though, is that the bellicose verse 2 about confounding our enemies was written by W.E.Hickson (1803 -1870). He would have been a bit young to have written that verse when Napoleon was around, but it could fit in nicely with the time of the Crimean War, when France was on the same side as we were! In the New Standard edition of the Hymns Ancient and Modern, there appears (for the first time and in 1983, remember) an alternative verse 2 – still anonymous – which goes:*

*Not on this land alone  
But be God's mercies known  
From shore to shore.  
Lord make the nations see  
That all should brothers be  
And form one family  
The wide world o'er.*

Some hope!!!

Happy Europe Day. Philip Worsfold

5<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

## **RECENT EVENTS...**

### **...AND THINGS TO COME**

#### **Monthly Reunions and Annual General Meeting.**

Since our last report, all meetings have been postponed until further notice. An Annual General meeting will be arranged as soon as it is safe to do so.

Future European events are shown on page12.

#### **ASSOCIATION TIES AND BADGES.**

In common with other sections, the British section of the Association has a necktie and a badge. Our particular items are common to both the British and Belgian sections. We have produced the ties and the Belgian section, the badges. We are looking into the possibility of having a unisex T-shirt or sweatshirt.. What do you think?

Ties are available, at £4.50 plus postage, and badges are in stock in small numbers, at £1.50 each, including UK inland postage. These items are available from **Philip Worsfold**. Please contact him first by e-mail or phone to check availability (details at the top of page 2.)

## **CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF LOGISTICS AND TRANSPORT (CILT) – RAILWAY STUDY FORUM**

**Railway Study Forum:** The former Railway Study Association has merged with the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT) as the Railway Study Forum. Subscription rates have changed and no longer include a subscription to 'Modern Railways'. Each annual session of lectures, in London and Birmingham and other locations are, held on various evenings.

Full details of the changes and details of all activities can be found on the CILT website.

### **YOUNG BUFFERS ASSOCIATION.**

There is no subscription provided that you have an e-mail address; and no obligation to attend their events. If you would like further details, the Secretary is Larry Fullwood, tel. 01485 541599, e-mail [larry.fullwood@virgin.net](mailto:larry.fullwood@virgin.net) .

### **REPTA.**

The long standing Railway Employees' and Public Transport Association offers bargain price insurance through AVIVA and concessions and discounts at stores and attractions throughout the country. The 'Yearbook' gives full details, including the invaluable guide to staff travel facilities throughout the world. For details contact our Asst Secretary, Peter Davies (see page 2), who is also General Secretary of REPTA; or visit: [www.repta.co.uk](http://www.repta.co.uk)

### **FEANDC.**

FEANDC has similar social aims to AEC; and like AEC has sections in a number of European countries, including some which do not have AEC sections.

More details and all other information about FEANDC are available from Peter Davies (address etc on Page 2).

### **AND FOR THE FUTURE???**

We shall endeavour to continue the production of these newsletters. I continue to use a variety of sources for news of international interest and thank those members who send me information – but I continue with my plea for more from you. I hope I shall be able to keep my promise of more articles. So please, put pen to paper to build up a library of articles. Please keep in touch and let us have your information, your views and your ideas. The next issue will be published for 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020. The copy deadline is **1<sup>st</sup> August 2020.**

*Since there are currently no events to summarise, there is no summary of events in this issue.*