



**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)).  
**Vice-President:** Dott. Giuseppe Cirillo (I)  
**European Secretary:** Malgorzata (Margaret) Boczek-Kwaczynska (PL).  
**Asst European Secretary:** Philip Worsfold, B.Sc., C.Eng., M.I.C.E., F.P.W.I. (GB)  
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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:**

Bob Clark,  
E-mail: [euroscottie@gmx.co.uk](mailto:euroscottie@gmx.co.uk) (NEW)

#### **Vice-president:**

Patrick Rigby,

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Peter Davies,;  
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#### **Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Recruitment Officer:**

Nigel Hyde,  
E-mail: [nigel.hyde6@btinternet.com](mailto:nigel.hyde6@btinternet.com)

#### **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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**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.

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

## EDITORIAL

My last editorial seems to have caused quite a stir in Europe; and especially in Germany, from where I have received several favourable comments. So much so, that the German section has decided to print a translated version in the next edition of their newsletter 'Schiene Europas'. Their national President and Honorary European President, Horst-Gerd Vanselow has also written a piece putting the German viewpoint, which I have translated into English to appear in this edition. He wrote his piece at the end of May. Since then we have seen here generally the end of stringent lockdown; but it has had to be reintroduced where there have been spikes in cases of covid-19. As I write, the wearing of facemasks in shops has become compulsory, but our personal experience so far in rural England is that some people are either unaware or don't care that the law has changed, for there are a few people still not wearing masks. The government's response has been dismally inadequate, often contradictory and as Horst says, more for party political reasons rather than for national well-being. It seems that more and more dubious decisions being taken behind closed doors; blame is insinuated where it is not due and I fear for the democratic process in this country.

We have also seen the rise of 'Black Lives Matter'; and the toppling of the statue of the slave trader Edward Colston has affected my thinking greatly – having been born in Bristol, the city which benefited so greatly from his ill-gotten wealth. When I was a child, the question of slavery was but a brief episode of history that was simply brushed under the carpet and was not talked about. But Bristol was always a port and a magnet for incomers – not least people who came from the Caribbean in the 1950's; and there was a bus boycott in 1963 in protest against the racist policy of not employing people of colour. The presence of Colston's statue has been an affront to those people – and the possibility of its removal discussed – for many years. It should have been removed long ago. I was glad to see it go. At the same time, one must remember a point that seems to have been glossed over. The slaves that Colston – and many others like him traded for – were sold to them by people who were also people of colour; for slavery had been a way of life across the north of Africa and the Mediterranean for millennia – and as far as we know elsewhere too. Someone I know, but who I no longer regard as a friend, told me he was proud to be white. I was appalled and reacted by saying I was proud to be human. But thinking about that, I'm not so sure now that humans have anything much to be proud about.

Philip Worsfold. August 2020

*(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.**

## THE PRESIDENT'S SLOT

**Bob Clark**

**A European journey from slavery to destruction and back to the future; via the Atlantic, Imperial rivalry, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Covid 19 et al.**

Well now where do I begin?

The whole world of course is in lockdown as we are in the midst of a pandemic which is isolating & dividing opinion worldwide with politicians claiming it is fake news and blaming foreign powers for the spread. This is a recurring theme in history blaming others for any perceived threat to the established order.

OK as I write (10.08.2020), I have just remembered that August 6 & 9 1945 were 2 horrific days in world history; the end of "steam age" warfare – and it will be observed that atomic weapons have never again been used in anger. The modern world has no need for this type of weapon in its arsenals. The effects of these bombings are still being felt today as the survivors and their descendants live with the constant illness and deformity 75 years after these earth shattering events.

Now just who decided what was the ESTABLISHED ORDER? For centuries this was usually the strongest ruler of an area usually by repressive actions and use of force to expand one's lands. This became the ruling classes; then the elite who are well versed in exploitation. This is evident in the slave trade which although practised for centuries became industrial in scale in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, bringing great wealth to those engaged in the vile & immoral trade. Anyone of status who wished to, (if they had a few pounds to invest) could buy directly or indirectly an African person or more for the purpose of exploitation for profit and greed. It wasn't just the lords & ladies, clergymen of all religious persuasions were also involved. In contrast to this a few enlightened individuals rallied against the slave trade eventually succeeding in getting it abolished in 1807 ending finally in 1833 (British colonies & territories) Other imperial empires were also heavily involved but the British state industrialised slavery and profited immensely Abolition came at a high price, a destructive civil war in the USA from 1860 to 1865 ending with a Union victory and the assassination of President Lincoln; a victory which still resonates in the 21st Century USA of today. In 1862 Manchester cotton mill workers decided to boycott cotton from the slave owning Confederate states, putting their jobs at risk- *{At a mass meeting in the Free Trade Hall, Manchesterl, on **New Year's Eve 1862, attended by a mixture of cotton workers, and the Manchester middle class, they passed a motion urging Lincoln to prosecute the war, abolish slavery and supporting the blockade - despite the fact that it was by now causing them to starve.}***

The British Government of the day borrowed £20m (**£2,396,301,812.11 – €2,658,493,989.96 in today's money**) the debt still being paid by the British taxpayer until 2015, **to compensate slave traders/owners for LOSS of possessions!!! But nothing for those enslaved, of course.** You can verify this by checking the historical records that show how inhumane the trade in people was – people, because that is what they were, dehumanised; just recorded as a commodity and given a value. This is verified on a database of University College London. The repercussions of past historical events manifest themselves throughout our modern society & today slavery still exists in many forms, the cheap item of clothing (child labour & low pay), the delicious take away/restaurant meal (alleged illegal immigrants often locked in unsanitary conditions), the food we put on our tables (people tied to an enforcer or gangmaster against their will); and the leisure industry (kidnapped or lured by a promise of a better life “sold” into prostitution or used as drug traffickers abandoned if caught threatened with retribution {personal & familial} if reluctant to obey their “owners”) What has this to do with the AEC I hear you ask? Directly nothing; indirectly everything those slave owners (the bad guys of 1830s Britain) used their funds from slavery to invest in our railway and generate wealth for themselves mainly adding to their power and influence over railways and politics – Gladstone being one such person of many commemorated by numerous monuments, statues, buildings & streets named after them.

So sitting here in 2021 there is a debate about the morality of using this money for railway construction. Rightly or wrongly we have therefore to look at this from a 19<sup>th</sup> Century perspective – a bribe was paid to each **slaver**\* to end the oppressive barbarous act. Money was invested and fortunes made in this new form of transport (and indeed; fortunes lost also) without which our railways may never have expanded to the extent they did bringing prosperity to Victorian society – well some of it anyway! It also gave this island a grossly inflated ego which to this day is a curse as it seems to be a genetic trait that is preventing us moving forward in cooperation with our close European family. This trait will never be cured by listening to experts or obeying rules - a quick drive to Barnard Castle to check one's eyesight is a slap in the face for all of us who do obey the rules. LOCKDOWN; self isolation; shielding – we are all in it together every where in the world unless you happen to be a Government adviser in London of course!!

As we in the AEC – and that includes the British SECTION – are part of the EUROPEAN family of railway people I am proud to be part of that family and wish to remain so. It is disturbing to hear that some think the British Section should change direction, which direction do they wish us to go? There is NO OTHER direction to go we are a EUROPEAN organisation by nature of the name, we are EUROPEAN by incorporation, by statute, ideology and EUROPEAN with PRIDE! Our family will remain united; our resolve to remain so, unrelenting. Those who think otherwise need to consider whether this organisation is right for them. A ship may sink taking all with it, the AEC is not Titanic we will sail together through calm & storm until the end.

Together as a EUROPEAN family let us all condemn racism and all other forms of hatred and intolerance. They have no place in a modern forward-looking society.

NO STATUES WERE HURT IN THE WRITING OF THIS ARTICLE!!

**Finally-** Stay Safe; Social Distance; Wear A Mask & Obey Your Countries lockdown instructions

[\***Slaver** - estate owner, manager, overseer; anyone who indirectly owned slaves i.e. through inheritance as all were eligible to claim the money].

## **GREAT BRITAIN IN BREXIT - FROM A GERMAN PERSPECTIVE**

*Horst-Gerd Vanselow – (translation by Philip Worsfold)*

The majority of German citizens and I myself regret Britain's exit from the EU. Together with France and Great Britain, Germany has formed a strong economic policy axis in the EU. The common internal market has brought benefits to all EU countries. We have held similar positions in the North Atlantic Alliance. Most Germans and Europeans think this cannot be. The EU is our life insurance. The close connection of the EU partners guarantees a peaceful coexistence in prosperity for the peoples on our continent.

The United Kingdom's exit from the European Union (EU) became a reality on January 31<sup>st</sup> 2020. This is a unique and deep cut in the history of European integration. The EU wanted the closest possible partnership with the UK. The guiding principle was fair competitive conditions, so that no unilateral advantages for the United Kingdom result from the fact that European environmental, social, labour or consumer protection standards are undermined. Brexit not only divides politics, but also British society.

Since the UK opted for Brexit, we have seen that the UK government has not tackled any of the country's pressing problems; whether housing shortages, the ailing health care system or the misery of schools.

London was the most important financial centre in Europe, but now this centre will move to Paris or Frankfurt. The British small and middle sized businesses will be significantly affected by this. Loans for these companies have so far been supported by the European capital market. In the future, lending in the UK will be subject to much stricter rules and loans will become significantly more expensive.

How will deep-sea fishing work in European coastal waters? British fishermen are no longer bound by quotas. On the other hand, they will control and defend their national fishing areas in the 200 mile zone. The German fishing fleet now consists of only seven deep-sea vessels. Their fishing spots are off the coasts of Norway, Spitsbergen, Greenland, Iceland and in the North Sea. Fishing is carried out exclusively on the basis of the catch quotas allocated by the EU for individual species and areas.

The positions of the EU and the United Kingdom have hardened. Both sides have actually announced that fisheries should start negotiations on the future relationship between the continent and the United Kingdom. An agreement should be reached as early as July 1, 2020, and all other trade issues will take until the end of the year (at least). French President Emanuel Macron has already announced that there will be no trade agreements with Britain without free access to British waters.

The United Kingdom has benefited greatly from grants from Brussels. From 2007 to 2013, Great Britain received more than seven billion euros for research and innovation programs. 5.2 billion euros have already been earmarked for British agriculture and rural development as well as 4.9 billion euros for social projects by 2020. In addition, there are 206 million euros for initiatives against youth unemployment, not to mention the almost six billion euros of the regional development fund, which primarily supports research and innovation. The Erasmus Plus program has helped over 36,000 British students annually to study abroad in the EU.

Just before Brexit, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Council President Charles Michel and EU Parliament President David Sassoli affirmed that Great Britain could no longer have unrestricted access to the European internal market after leaving the Community.

I knew people in Poland and Hungary who were no longer willing to do or the voluntary work of the A.E.C. but who actually asked me whether they could take advantage of the services and offers of the A.E.C. It is similar to me with Great Britain and the EU. In conclusion; I am convinced that some British politicians have glorified "Brexit" for their partisan advantages. In my opinion, this "Brexit" only brings disadvantages for all of us. But if a large part of the British population absolutely wants to go this route, they must also accept the disadvantages.

## **PEOPLE**

### **Horst Jaschewski**

We were saddened to hear from Horst Vanselow that on the morning of 20<sup>th</sup> July the Deputy Treasurer of the German section, Horst Jaschewski died unexpectedly at the age of 82. He had been unwell but it was thought he was on the mend and was due to go for rehabilitation was planned in Bad Sülze.

Bob Clark sent the following message of sympathy from the British section to Horst Vanselow.

"I was saddened to read your news just now. I did not know who he was until I looked at the photo. I now know this Horst and he seemed a very quiet man when I had seen him on European Days. May I offer my personal condolences to you and the German Section along with the friends & family of Horst. I also offer the condolences of the British Section especially those who remember Horst. Well life is strange and I remember my mother worrying about me in London at the height of the IRA terror bombings in stations. I told her I could avoid them but she said " what's for you won't go past you". This is so true as death is the one thing none of us can avoid. Our thoughts and prayers are with you at this sad time. With deepest sympathy & in European Solidarity.

Bob Clark

President British Section

Association Européenne des Cheminots"

I also found Horst Jaschewski a most friendly and affable person. I deeply regret his passing. - Philip Worsfold

### **John Batts**

John advises us that his entire photographic archive from 1947 to 1988 is now available to view on line at [www.transporttreasury.com](http://www.transporttreasury.com).

Later pictures should follow shortly. He says "Amongst the rubbish there is a lot of very interesting European material".

## **TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT**

### **Privilege Travel on London Underground**

During the current emergency, those with privilege Oyster cards can postpone formal updating, provided that they can produce both their previous and current entitlement cards when updating. The cards will not give privilege fares until updated. Entrance hall staff at London Underground stations should by now have been trained in updating Oyster cards, but not all have. In case of difficulty try enquiry offices such as that at Paddington or Kings Cross St. Pancras.

### **European Rail Timetable**

The European Rail Timetable suspended publication in April in its paper format, but was planned to reappear in its summer edition in July.

Meanwhile, it has continued to produce electronic Friday Flyers for regular subscribers – which have also been useful in the preparation of this bulletin.

You can order this unique international timetable via the website

[www.europeanrailtimetable.eu](http://www.europeanrailtimetable.eu)

## Rail Report Europe

Jochen Reitstaetter and Trevor Garrod have launched a quarterly series of illustrated reports on international rail travel topics. The first appeared in late April and focussed on international night trains and the work of Back-on-Track. The next is due to appear in July. To join the electronic mailing list, just e-mail [trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:trevorgarrod2000@yahoo.co.uk) or [reitstaetter@catchup-pr.com](mailto:reitstaetter@catchup-pr.com)

*[Philip Worsfold can e-mail you copies of these reports if you are interested.]*

## European Rail Campaign (UK)

In its Spring Update ERC(UK) reports that it joined with 250 other organisations Europe-wide, including environmental groups and trade unions, to issue a joint press release requesting that state aid be directed away from short-haul air towards rail, which has a much lower carbon footprint. The press release received good coverage from the BBC's Environment Correspondent on April 6<sup>th</sup>. Visit the website <https://eurailcampaigntuk.org> ERC(UK) was formed in November last year and continues to grow. To join, send £10 as minimum subscription to the Membership Secretary, 69 Dudley Rd., Tipton, West Midlands, DY4 8EE.

## Eurotunnel: Shuttle results for May 2020.

- **Truck Shuttles: 90,301 trucks**
- **Passenger Shuttles: 41,644 passenger vehicles\***

*\*Includes cars, motorcycles, vehicles with trailers, caravans, camper vans and coaches.*

Whilst lockdown eased in France on 11 May, severe travel restrictions remain, preventing anyone from travelling more than 100km from their home in France. Eurotunnel continues to focus on ensuring the supply of critical goods between France and the United Kingdom via its Truck and Passenger Shuttle services.

Since mid-March Eurotunnel has taken protective hygiene measures and social distancing continues to be strictly applied for both staff and customers, in addition to a voluntary reduction in the number of trucks carried on each crossing. This restriction does not apply to cars and vans travelling in the Passenger Shuttles, as drivers and passengers remain in their vehicles during the crossing, without having direct physical contact with staff or other passengers.

**Le Shuttle Freight** carried more than 90,000 trucks in May 2020, mainly due to the resilience of demand for food, pharmaceuticals and e-commerce goods. With an average of 4 departures per hour, Le Shuttle is particularly adapted to this type of product, confirming once again that the Tunnel remains a Vital Link between the United Kingdom and continental Europe. Since 1<sup>st</sup> January, more than 557,000 trucks have crossed the Channel using our Shuttles.

In May 2020, the **Passenger Shuttles** carried more than 41,000 passenger vehicles. This figure should be seen in light of the very severe restrictions in relation to border crossings imposed by the French and British governments. Since 1<sup>st</sup> January, more than 481,000 passenger vehicles have crossed the Channel on board our Passenger shuttles.

## Back-On-Track October Event In Brussels

Plans are going ahead for this 3-day event from Thursday October 15<sup>th</sup> to Saturday October 17<sup>th</sup>. Already speakers have been confirmed from the European Commission (DGMOVE), Community of European Railways, ALLRAIL and the European Passengers' Federation. The programme is evolving and it is likely that the Thursday and Friday sessions will feature presentations and panel discussions on the past, present and future of night trains; how a night train network should be managed; economic challenges (value chain and local economic development) and revival of night train hubs.

The Saturday session will then discuss Back-on-Track internal matters and action but also be open to a wider audience.

A crowd-funding page has been launched to help pay for the event:

<https://www.okpal.com/back-on-track-belgium-night-train-conference-202/#/>



## Night Train Progress And Campaigns

**Sweden** The Swedish Transport Administration released a report in early May recommending a night train Malmö – Cologne – Brussels as a first step towards improving links from Scandinavia to Germany and beyond. Accepting that it was difficult to make sleeper services profitable under current conditions, the report calculated a shortfall of 4.7 million Euro per year. However, a poll showed that 21% of Swedes considered a possible night train connection to the Continent as attractive, which suggests it is likely that the service would soon become commercially viable.

Currently only 1% of the travel market between Sweden and the rest of Europe is by rail, but market research shows that more people would do so if there was a better supply of services. It was also found that 12 hours was the maximum time that business travellers were likely to spend on an overnight service whereas for leisure travellers the maximum was 17 hours.

2022 would be the earliest that such a service could be running.

### France

1. *Oui-au-train-de nuit* has set out 9 actions necessary to relaunch night trains and has sent these to the Minister of Transport, whom its representatives were due to meet on May 20th .

These actions are detailed as part of a 48-page document and have been supported by other organisations including Objectif Train de Nuit and the Fédération Nationale des Associations des Usagers des Transports.

They are

- (i) Maximise the availability and effectiveness of the rail network.
- (ii) Enable SNCF Réseau to work on a more level playing field.
- (iii) Form a modernised fleet of rolling stock.
- (iv) Motivate mobility operators, with open data and support for open access.
- (v) Improve the French rail model in comparison to those of other European countries.
- (vi) Construct a framework of intermodal competition.
- (vii) Encourage a move to more energy-efficient modes.
- (viii) Encourage local communities to place rail at the heart of land-use.
- (ix) Encourage changes in behaviour towards low carbon activity.

*Objectif Train de Nuit* The association was very encouraged by the vote of the Grand-Est region, on April 27<sup>th</sup>, to support a feasibility study into a Barcelona – Frankfurt overnight service.

Support has also been shown by infrastructure managers including SNCF Réseau, DN Netz and LFP Perthus.

## FRANCE: Grand Est To Pilot Revitalisation Of France's Rural Branch Lines

22 July 2020

The Grand Est region has invited tenders for a 22-year concession to rehabilitate (to passenger standards), operate and maintain the Nancy – Mirecourt – Vittel – Contrexéville line in Lorraine. The line is currently in use for mineral water traffic from the two spa resorts of Vittel and Contrexéville.

### Spanish National Railways (RENFE) Loses its Monopoly.

David Gubler

Spanish national operator Renfe and Rielsfera, a subsidiary of French National Railways (SNCF), have submitted their requests for high-speed train paths in Spain ahead of the development of the 2021 timetable, which marks the liberalisation of Spanish high-speed operation.

RENFE and Rielsfera, along with the Ilsa consortium of Trenitalia and Air Nostrum, were selected by Spanish high-speed infrastructure manager Adif AV to negotiate access agreements to operate services on the Madrid – Barcelona – French border (Corridor 1); Madrid – Valencia/Alicante (Corridor 2), and Madrid – Seville/Málaga (Corridor 3) in November 2019.

RENFE will operate services under the new agreement from the start of the 2021 timetable on December 13, while Rielsfera is due to begin operation in spring 2021. Ilsa will begin operating with the introduction of the 2022 timetable on December 12 2021. Services

operated under public service obligation contracts (PSOs) are due to be liberalised from December 2023.

The deadline to submit the requests was July 3, after the period was extended due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The three operators signed framework agreements with Adif AV in May, outlining the general aspects of operation.

On each corridor, Adif has offered three packages of services. Package A is the largest accounting for 70% of services and has been awarded to RENFE. Package B representing 20% of services has gone to Ilsa, and Package C accounting for the remaining 10% has been awarded to Rielsfera.

On Corridor 1, package A comprises 48 daily services (three trains per hour per direction); B comprises 16 services (one train per hour per direction), and C comprises five services, (one train every three hours in each direction).

package C comprises four services (four trains a day in each direction).

All three packages will be for 10 years, after the National Markets and Competition Commission (CNMC) reversed an earlier decision to limit RENFE's agreement to five years. The operators have now submitted their train path requests under the agreements, which Adif AV will now analyse for feasibility and compatibility with the other operators' requests. If there are conflicts, Adif AV will work with the operators to adjust them. If this is not possible, priority is given to certain routes.

A provisional timetable will be released to the operators on August 21, with the final allocation of capacity released on October 13. The requests for capacity will be kept confidential until the timetable is announced.

Adif AV will publish the remaining capacity within three months of the signing of the framework agreements, with operators interested in running open-access services invited to apply for any excess routes.

Adif AV says the liberalisation of passenger services represents an opportunity to promote sustainable transport, at a time when the carbon emissions must be reduced. The infrastructure manager says the Covid-19 outbreak has also shown industrialised countries that a cleaner environment and healthier population cope better with diseases and pandemics.

"It is expected that the railway will become the most environmentally friendly means of transport, playing an especially prominent role in short-distance mobility," Adif AV says. "In this sense, the railway is in a position to offer the best response to future mobility needs, both for freight and passengers."

### **Italy launches new north-south high speed train route**

Italian train companies Trenitalia and Italo are to offer direct high-speed services between Turin and Reggio Calabria from June.

New direct high-speed services will soon start running from the northern city of Turin to the southern tip of the country, state railway company Trenitalia and its rival Italo have both announced.

Italo announced in May that its high-speed trains would soon be providing a new direct link between Turin and Reggio Calabria in the south, starting from June 14th, Italian financial daily *Il Sole 24 Ore* reported.

Trenitalia also announced its own high-speed trains would run on the same route, from June 3rd - coinciding with the planned date for resuming interregional travel across Italy.

The Italian government has said unrestricted travel between regions will once again be possible from this date, as well as between EU countries – though one government minister on Thursday warned that this will be decided region by region, depending on the risk of infection in each.

Trenitalia said it plans to double the number of trains in operation from early June, and will be providing all passengers with a "safety kit" including mask, hand sanitizer, gloves and disposable headrest. starting in early June.

Most of Italy's high-speed services had been suspended under Italy's lockdown, as all non-urgent travel was banned. The current rules forbid non-essential travel between regions until at least June 2nd.

### **'Human error' likely cause of fatal Czechia train crash**

Daniel Harries & Alec Fenn 09 July 2020

Authorities investigating a crash between two passenger trains on the Czechia-Germany border believe it was caused by an error made by one of the drivers.

The trains collided head-on in western Czechia, killing at least two people onboard and injuring at least 20, officials said on 7<sup>th</sup> July

The Czech Rail Safety Inspectorate said the collision took place after 3 p.m. (1 p.m. GMT) between the stations of Nove Hamry and Pernink, near the border with Germany.

A spokesman from Czechia's national train authority told CGTN that human error was the likely cause of the crash.

"The crash happened on a single local railway with low-intensity traffic, which is based on a simplified rail-traffic management system. According to the latest investigation, the cause of the crash was the human factor of one of the train drivers."

Both trains operate between the spa town of Karlovy Vary in Czechia and the town of Johanngeorgenstadt in the German state of Saxony.

Radek Hes, spokesman for the regional rescue service, said the number of injured could reach 30 and that rescuers from neighbouring Germany were helping at the site.

He said it was not immediately clear how many passengers were travelling on the trains.

### **PKP (Polish Rail) Cargo's new strategy 'Embracing intermodal'**

PKP Cargo, like all operators, has suffered a hit as a result of the coronavirus shutdowns. However, the company remains committed to a strategy of increasing intermodal volumes as it transitions from a railway operator into a logistics specialist, as CEO Czeslaw Warsewicz reveals to IRJ.

#### **More Electrification In Poland**

A project has been announced to electrify what was once the Royal Prussian Eastern Railway from Kostrzyn (on the German – Polish border) to Krzyz and then on to Pila. Work will begin in 2023 at the earliest and will then be completed as quickly as possible.

The city of Gorzow Wielkopolski and neighbouring authorities have been campaigning for years for this scheme. The region will then be able to get more trains from central Poland, at speeds of up to 160 kph; and the line onwards to Bydgoszcz will also be modernised to allow speeds of up to 200 kph

More capacity will be created for freight trains and station improvements will include real-time information and better platform surfaces.

### **Baden-Württemberg plans order for 230 double-deck EMUs**

The German state of Baden-Württemberg is reportedly planning to purchase up to 130 double-deck EMUs via state-owned leasing company Baden-Württemberg State Rail Vehicle Authority (SFBW) in an order that could be worth around €1.47bn.

### **Launch of the New ALPEN-SYLT Night Express**

#### **From Sylt to Salzburg in one night: Westerland – Salzburg**

On July 5, 2020 the new ALPEN-SYLT Night Express successfully completed 1,000-kilometre long initial trip to Austria with 120 guests on board. This new German night train was successfully launched on its initial journey south. At noon, the train, which travelled to the island of Sylt the evening before, arrived in the Mozart city of Salzburg with its 120 passengers.

"We believe in the successful renaissance of night trains in Europe. The offer fulfills the desire of holidaymakers and business travelers for sustainable travel by rail, even over longer distances—from the consumer's point of view an attractive alternative to air or car travel," says Dr. Markus Hunkel, Managing Director of RDC Germany.

Destinations such as the coasts of Schleswig-Holstein or the Alpine region are particularly in demand this year. With the new ALPEN-SYLT overnight express, the private railway company RDC Group is now offering holidaymakers and business travellers a traffic jam-free and stress-free journey four times a week until the beginning of November 2020. The route runs from Westerland/Sylt via Hamburg, Frankfurt/Main and Munich to Salzburg and back (Thursdays and Saturdays southbound; Fridays and Sundays northbound).

"Stretched out comfortably in your personal couchette car compartment, simply overnight, you can cover more than a thousand kilometres to the north or south and arrive rested at your destination—no one else in this country offers that. And the CO2 balance is impressive," says Hunkel.

The ticket price from €99 (single compartment incl. 1 child up to age 14 years old) or from €399 (Friends + Family compartment) includes the entire train compartment with couchette equipment (bedding, towels). Infection protection for all passengers on board is secured by ensuring that each passenger travels in his or her own compartment, which remains empty when the passenger departs the train. Additional hygiene measures have been taken. Onboard in their own compartment, passengers do not need to wear a mouth and nose cover.

For its first journey north, the ALPEN-SYLT Night Express departed Salzburg in the afternoon (July 5, 2020), and arrived on Sylt on Monday (July 6) at noon.

### **New International Train Service**

Starting in June, a new train service now connects Berlin and Dresden with Prague, Vienna and Graz, restoring the historic 'Vindobona' service.

The new connection is cooperation between the companies Deutsche Bahn (DB), Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB) and Czech Railways (CD), as DB announced on Sunday.

According to DB, the train will run on the route of the "Vindobona" express, a connection from Berlin to Vienna via Dresden and Prague which was operated from 1957 to 2014.

The Vindobona - named after the first Roman settlement on the Donau river- was initially known for its trains considered to be extremely comfortable and modern for their time.

Originally, the restored train connection - to be renamed as the "Railjet" - was supposed to resume operation on May 5th. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, however, the borders to Germany's neighbouring countries were closed.

The Czech Republic opened its borders with Germany and Austria on June 5th, ahead of the EU-wide border open on Monday June 15th. On June 4th, Austria also scrapped controls at all land borders, except Italy.

"By the end of June, we will resume international long-distance traffic to all countries. This is a further step towards normality," said DB long-distance transport boss Michael Peterson.

The new Railjet service means that there will be an additional early morning connection from Berlin to Dresden and a new late connection in the opposite direction, bringing the number of journeys between the two cities to 30 a day.

The trains will be maintaining their historical comfort with, among other things, on-board gastronomy, power connections and free Wifi, according to Peterson.

In 2018, the previously longstanding Berlin-Vienna overnight train also made a comeback, transporting passengers from the German capital to Austrian capital in 10 hours.

## **A NEW HIGH SPEED RAIL NETWORK FOR EUROPE?**

### **EC Proposes Economic Relief Measures To Support Rail**

Reductions in track access charges, easing of mark-up regulations, amendments to reservation charges and safeguards for infrastructure managers are among proposals set out by the European Commission (EC) to ease the financial burden on the rail sector caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

### **The EU's Covid-19 economic recovery package could be used to fund a European ultra-rapid train network - including a four-hour train link from Paris to Berlin.**

The EU's €2 trillion recovery package for economies blighted by the coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent lockdown has been driven by French president Emmanuel Macron and German chancellor Angela Merkel, and aims to avoid a damaging and long-lasting recession.

It proposes helping out industries particularly badly hit by the lockdown such as tourism.

But a report from the Vienna Institute for Economic Studies looking at ways of spending the fund to give the greatest benefit also suggests a series of massive infrastructure projects including a European ultra-rapid train network.

The document proposes "a European green high-speed train network to be established as part of a recovery programme from the Covid-19 crisis over the period of the 2020s.

"The URT network should be a new double-track high-speed railway system that is complementary to the existing networks.

'However, suitable existing lines could also be adapted. An average speed in the range of 250-350 km/h should be achieved. This would allow passengers to halve the current rail travel times, for instance, from Paris to Berlin in about four hours, making air travel for a large part of the intra-European passenger transport obsolete.

"Cutting by around half the EU's domestic air passenger operations has the potential to reduce global commercial aviation CO2 emissions by about 4-5 percent. In addition, rail cargo capacities would be increased, freight transport speeded up and so also road-vehicle emissions reduced."

The plan proposes four lines.

1. Paris to Dublin - from Paris to Brest, taking the Brest-Cork ferry then running from Cork to Dublin. The report describes this route as 'taking on an additional significance in the context of Brexit'.

2. Lisbon to Helsinki - running from Lisbon through Spain and France, via Paris, then to Belgium and the Netherlands before splitting into a loop via Berlin and onwards to Helsinki.

3. Brussels to Valetta - through Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and Italy before taking the ferry to Malta

4. Berlin to Nicosia - with a ferry-based sea link between Piraeus and Paphos and a loop between Vienna and Sofia.

The plan would give France an extra 2,060km of high-speed railway and Germany an extra 2,299km.

## 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 below. Booking is open until 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020..

### **NOTE CHANGED DATES**

**French section 'Sortie à Nice', cancelled. At present no decision has been made regarding later reinstatement..**

**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.

### Aktuelle Veranstaltungstermine

09. 09.2020 RV Rostock: Besuch des Bahnhofs Teterow

11.09.2020 RV Hamburg: Fahrt mit dem Raddampfer Freya

**10.10.2020 Virtueller Delegiertentag der Sektion Deutschland mit Vorstandswahl**

02.12.2020 RV Rostock: Adventsfeier im Clubraum

### Europäische Treffen

**17.05. - 22.05.2021 Europäische Tage 2021 der Sektionen Rumänien und Bulgarien in Sofia**

**September 2022 Europäische Tage 2022 der Sektionen Spanien in Madrid**

**Mai 2023 Europäische Tage 2022 der Sektionen Sektionen Polen in Lublin**

## 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**

Accommodation in **Hotel Rila** \*\*\* with full board including drinks for lunch and dinner, bus transport, tour guide with guide, entry to visits and transfers.

**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 centre.
- 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 May18 (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**

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

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.

### **Congress 2021 in Lugano.**

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 programme 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 wish to give them the opportunity to register for Congress 2021. We will send you registration forms again.

## **WILL COMMUTERS EVER GO BACK TO COMMUTER TRAINS?**

David Zipper - April 30, 2020

***No form of public transportation has lost more passengers in the coronavirus crisis than the trains that carry suburban workers to urban jobs. Will they ever recover?***

Last year, the fiscal management control board of MBTA, Boston's regional transit agency, faced a critical decision. With area commuters enduring the worst car traffic in the United States, would the board green-light a multi-billion-dollar revamp of its traditional commuter rail network, expanding it to offer bi-directional "regional rail" service every 15 minutes? Doing so would be a paradigm shift for a network that was designed to fulfil the more modest goal of bringing suburban commuters into the city in the morning and back out again in the evening.

The answer was 'yes'. In November 2019, the MBTA's board approved the commuter rail transformation project. Speaking after the vote, the board's chair said that it was time to "provide a more aggressive service for the region ... in order to decongest the roadway systems." MBTA would still have to find upwards of \$10 billion, but transit advocates were thrilled to envision a network that could accommodate Bostonians ill served by traditional commuter rail, such as workers travelling to suburban job centres, or parents scrambling to get to a midday doctor's appointment.

But then the coronavirus lockdowns arrived, and MBTA passenger numbers crashed more than 90%. Across the United States, passenger counts on commuter rail have fallen even more sharply than those for bus, subway and light rail systems. In Maryland passenger numbers on MARC's commuter rail service, which collects D.C.-bound workers from points all across the state (and into West Virginia), plummeted 94% since lockdowns kept much of

the federal workforce at home; in Baltimore, by contrast, subway and bus passenger numbers fell 75% and 51%, respectively. In Chicago, the Metra commuter rail system anticipates a 97% dropoff in April, while trips on CTA's bus and rail networks have dropped "only" 80%.

Will these commuters ever come back? With gas prices at record lows, traffic light and home working being normalized, transit experts fear that rail passengers may be slow to return when the pandemic ebbs. But there *is* a path forward for these systems – if their leaders embrace the kind of visionary transformation that MBTA's board did a few months ago.

It feels like ancient history now, but until very recently commuter rail was riding a wave of passenger growth. Passenger trips nationwide rose almost 4% between 2017 through 2019, more than double the rate of heavy rail, the transit mode with the next-highest gain. Many individual commuter rail networks did even better; those in Long Island, Orlando and Denver attracted at least 10 percent more passengers than in 2019 than they had the year before.

Darnell Grisby, director of policy development and research at the American Public Transportation Association (disclosure: I have done consulting work for APTA), believes that worsening car traffic boosted commuter rail's recent passenger numbers: "The increase in vehicle miles travelled has caused additional congestion, which makes commuter rail more competitive." Among transit modes, commuter rail is particularly well-positioned to benefit from traffic woes because its relatively affluent passengers can more easily afford a car. A survey released by MBTA in 2018 found that 45% of commuter rail passengers had an annual income that exceeded \$108,000, compared with 26% of heavy rail passengers and 15% of those riding a bus. Stephanie Wiggins, CEO of Southern California's Metrolink commuter rail system, says that the median income of her system's weekday passengers is \$92,000, and that 85% own a car.

Historically, commuter rail service has been designed to serve the needs of suburbanites who travel into and out of the central city at peak hours during the working week, often driving to large "park and ride" lots arrayed along the route that fill up in the morning and empty out at dinnertime. Far fewer trains are available for city residents needing to "reverse commute" to reach jobs in the suburbs, or for those travelling at off-peak times (who are disproportionately women). The focus on peak service is expensive for transit agencies, particularly because many commuter rail employees must work short shifts.

### **Simply "winning back" the old commuter rail crowds could be the wrong frame**

During the current pandemic, data from cities nationwide collected by Transit App shows that peak transit demand – commuter rail's lifeblood – has collapsed, while off-peak demand has been more resilient. Those passengers are often the ones doing work deemed essential – health care, public safety and service jobs. It's unclear whether the traditional rush hour peak will snap back once the current lockdowns ease and the less-essential workers reappear. Offices may stagger opening hours to help avoid crowding, and those with the option to telecommute may be encouraged to continue doing so, as European cities like Milan are now doing.

The latter scenario is particularly problematic for commuter rail; Wiggins says that 30% of Metrolink passengers chose to telecommute regularly before the virus struck. To lure passengers back, agencies will need to be able to keep them safe. The good news is that they can choose from among an array of strategies and technologies to do so, ranging from ultraviolet light disinfection to reconfiguration of train cars interiors to adopting a policy of operational transparency so passengers can see agency safety efforts with their own eyes. Systems in Asia are a frequently cited model. In Taiwan, for example, all passengers commuting by rail between Taipei and Taiwan must wear masks, and transit employees check passengers for fevers.

But simply "winning back" the old commuter rail crowds could be the wrong frame; it's possible that a whole new set of passengers could board trains in the future, if the service could be adapted to their needs. Over the long run, Yonah Freemark of the Transport Politic blog believes that commuter rail must expand to become true regional rail: "These lines need to move into providing all-day, frequent, two-way services in order to attract more



passengers,” he says. Expanded, bi-directional service would improve access to suburban jobs, and also offer security to passengers that they can travel at off-peak times if something unexpected pops up. “People in our region want access to rail throughout the day and throughout the weekend,” says Wiggins.

Another opportunity: Most people won’t walk further than a quarter mile to a transit station, but the recent upsurge in bicycle purchases could make commuter rail a feasible option for those who live further away. Agencies can appeal to these new cyclists by installing secure bike parking at rail stations, as in the Netherlands, and by adding more bike spaces to trains, as systems like MBTA and MARC have been doing.

That’s the more expansive commuter-rail vision that MBTA’s board embraced last November, and it aligns with pre-pandemic expansion schemes in other regions as well. In the Washington, D.C. region, Virginia’s VRE and Maryland’s MARC systems are developing plans to extend service across state boundaries, while the Bay Area’s Caltrain is pursuing a dedicated source of funding to increase service frequency.

But these regional rail expansions carry price tags that now feel particularly daunting at a time when cities and states are strapped for cash. Potential funding sources do still exist; rock-bottom oil prices suggest drivers may be more willing to accept a gas tax hike, for instance. Or the federal government could use deficit funding. As Beth Osborne, the director of Transportation for America, notes, “it’s only with transit that we assume we need a dedicated fund from the user.”

Local governments have some funding options of their own, particularly if they can capture some of a future increase in land value on parcels adjacent to regional rail stations. Such increments will be higher if property owners can build taller buildings near stations—which also offers the secondary benefit of growing long-term rail demand from those living and working nearby.

With cad traffic already rebounding in at least some U.S. cities, investments like these can keep commuter rail networks competitive. The alternative – a long-term slide in passenger numbers, service cuts and a spike in traffic congestion when ex-passengers flood the highways – could be untenable for some of the most vibrant metro economies in the country. “Our region would come to an absolute standstill,” MBTA oversight board member Monica Tibbits-Nutt tells me when I ask her to imagine Boston without its regional trains. “I have no idea what impact it would have on businesses being able to attract and retain workers. The idea of our roadways getting worse ... at some point you hit a breaking point. We’re already pretty close.”

#### **About the Author**

David Zipper is a Visiting Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School's Taubman Center for State and Local Government. He writes frequently about the future of urban mobility and technology.

*[Editor’s note: In this article I have anglicised the spelling and substituted British equivalents for American terms.]*

## **THE OXFORD CANAL**

**John Hayward**

Prior to the development of the canal system, transport was slow and expensive over roads which were often just muddy tracks. The only alternative means of moving goods long distances was via coastal shipping and along some major rivers such as the Thames, Severn, Humber and Mersey. Other rivers were generally only navigable for short distances inland. As the country developed, industrialists needed better means of transport. The development of the Turnpike Trusts during the 17th and 18th centuries helped but movement was still quite slow and expensive. The Industrial Revolution was creating huge amounts of heavy products which had to be moved. Roads simply could not handle such weights and the vehicles needed to move this produce did not exist. Canals were the answer to moving heavy objects large distances.

The development of our canal system stemmed from the Bridgewater Canal which is sometimes described as England’s first canal. Named after its owner, Francis Egerton the third Duke of Bridgewater who built the canal to transport coal from his mines at Worsley to the industrial areas of Manchester, the Bridgewater Canal was the forerunner of our canal networks. As a young man Francis Egerton, took a grand tour of Europe, and was evidently impressed with the canals in use on the continent, particularly the Canal du Midi in France,

which spurred him on to develop this means of transport to serve his collieries in Lancashire. The Duke gave the task of designing and building the canal to James Brindley – an engineer who at this time had never built a canal before. As such, the duke was taking a great risk and he even had to borrow £25,000 to pay for the project – which was a vast sum of money then. It took two years to build the canal which opened on 17th July 1761, and it is now has a special place in history, as the first canal in Britain to be built without following an existing watercourse, and so became a model for those that followed it. The canal was a huge success as it made the duke a lot of money. The price of coal fell in Manchester by 50% therefore making it cheaper. People could not get enough of the duke's coal. It revolutionised transport in this country and marked the beginning of the golden canal era which followed from 1760 to 1830. When commercial canals began to be constructed in the 1700s, the men who built them were known as navigators. Over time this was shortened to navvies. Work for a navvy was hard indeed; shifting tons of soil and rock day in, day out, cutting their way through the earth with the simplest of tools. Their work involved literally cutting their way through the earth creating channels, using picks, shovels and wheelbarrows. Once a canal channel, or 'cut', had been dug, the navvies then lined it with 'puddle' (compressed wet clay) to make it watertight and they'd pack it down hard by driving sheep and cattle down the canal. In the early days of canal building, many navvies were local farm labourers, no stranger to hard toil but unaccustomed to the mammoth task of moving enormous amounts of earth and blasting solid rock with dynamite. It was dangerous work resulting in serious injury, loss of limbs and even death. James Brindley went on to design and build nearly 400 miles of canals. He tried to go around hills where possible but, if this was impossible, he used locks to move a canal barge up or down before it returned to a flat level. By 1840, there were nearly 4,500 miles of canals in Britain but, from then on, there began a slow decline due to the development of the railways and, later, competition from road transport emerging after the 1920s. For over 150 years, the principal means of propulsion for canal boats and barges, was the horse. A barge would have a man on board to steer it with his wife or a young boy leading the horse along the tow path. The horse hauling the barge by a rope attached to it. Around 1886, the first canal boats appeared that were powered by coal fired steam engines. These were succeeded by gas engine powered craft from 1912 onwards that did not need so much cargo space taken up on the boat by a steam engine, boiler and the storage of the coal or the man power required to work the steam engine.

In 1948 the waterways were nationalised. Most of the boats were transferred to the British Transport Commission. Unfortunately the canals were suffering from a lack of maintenance during the war, and traffic had declined to an all time low. Despite some attempts at revival, by the 1960s a lot of the boats were surplus to requirements. In 1963 The British Transport Commission became the British Waterways Board, and one of their early decisions was to discontinue most of its narrow boat carrying operations. This followed a bad winter where boats were iced up for months and much cargo was transferred to the roads.

The future looked bleak for the canals at this time but the British Waterways Board had been tasked with developing and maintaining certain canals, including the Oxford Canal for leisure purposes and slowly the numbers of people using the canals for pleasure boating began to rise. Leisure usage of the canal system has continued to expand rapidly into the 21st Century. In July, 2012, all British Waterways' assets, liabilities and responsibilities in England and Wales were transferred to the Canal & River Trust. At the same time, the Canal & River Trust merged with the English and Welsh operations of The Waterways Trust, a charity previously affiliated to British Waterways, to avoid confusion and as both charities had similar aims. The Canal and River Trust holds the guardianship of 2,000 miles of canals and rivers, together with reservoirs and a wide range of heritage buildings and structures, in England and Wales. BWML, a private company limited by guarantee, is wholly owned by the Canal & River Trust and manages some 20 marinas. It provides retail sales, moorings and services and also acts as a shop front in the issue of such things as short-term licences. In Scotland, British Waterways continues to operate as a stand-alone public corporation under the trading name Scottish Canals.

The Oxford Canal is among the earliest of cuts in the canal age. It was initially designed by James Brindley, succeeded by Samuel Simcock and Robert Whitworth after Brindley's untimely death in 1772 at the age of 56. It was opened in sections between 1774 and 1790

with the purpose of bringing coal from the Coventry coalfields to Oxford and the River Thames. There were 28 locks all with single top and bottom gates, and 38 of the characteristic lifting bridges. A slight change of route occurred at Heyford (between the Heyford Wharf and Allen's Lock), where canal used the bed of the River Cherwell and a new cut was made for the river alongside, thus saving two aqueducts. The canal formed part of Brindley's grand plan for a waterway 'cross' linking the rivers Thames, Mersey, Trent and Severn. Providing a direct link with London via the Thames, it was hugely profitable for several years. The arrival of the Grand Junction Canal, linking Braunston to London in 1805 and later becoming the backbone of the Grand Union Canal, finally broke its stranglehold and effectively bypassed the southern half of the Oxford Canal. In the 1830s, Marc Brunel (father of I.K. Brunel) and William Cubitt made the most of developments in engineering to straighten Brindley's original line. It is now 75 miles long with 46 locks. Trade began to seriously decline on the Oxford Canal after World War II, but commerce continued well into the 1960s. The southern section between Napton and Oxford remains remarkably unspoilt and offers an evocative insight into canal life as it would have been two centuries ago. It has now become popular for leisure use, as it meanders slowly through the countryside, free from large-scale development. Most of the settlements along its length are pretty villages that are popular mooring spots for narrowboats.

### **HULL'S VIEW OF HELL.**

One day three men, a lawyer, a doctor and an engineer appeared before St Peter as he stood guarding the Pearly Gates. The first man to step forward was the lawyer. With confidence and assurance he proceeded to deliver an eloquent address which left St Peter dazed and bewildered. Before the venerable saint could recover the lawyer quickly handed him a writ of mandamus, pushed his way in; striding through the portals. Next came the doctor. With impressive dignified bearing he introduced himself; 'I am Dr Brown. St Peter received him cordially. 'I feel I know you, Dr Brown. Many who preceded you said you sent them here. Welcome to our city' The engineer, modest and diffident, had been standing in the background. He now stepped forward. 'I am looking for a job he said. St Peter wearily shook his head. 'I'm sorry' he replied. 'We have no work here for you. If you want a job you can go to Hell'. This response sounded familiar to the engineer and made him feel more at home. 'Very well' he said, 'I have had Hell all my life and I guess I can stand it better than the others. St Peter was puzzled. 'Look here, young man, what are you?' 'I am an engineer' was the reply. 'Oh yes' said St Peter. 'Do you belong to the locomotive brotherhood?' 'No, I am sorry,' the engineer responded apologetically. 'I am a different kind of engineer'. 'I do not understand,' said St Peter 'what on earth do you do?' The engineer recalled a definition and calmly replied: 'I apply mathematical principles to the control of natural forces'. This sounded meaningless to St Peter and his temper got the better of him. 'Young man' he said, 'you can go to Hell with your mathematical principles and try your hand on some of the natural forces there!' 'That suits me' responded the engineer. 'I am always glad to go where there is a tough job to tackle'. Whereupon he departed for the Nether Region. And it came to pass that strange reports began to reach St Peter. The celestial denizens, who had amused themselves in the past by looking down upon the less fortunate creatures in the inferno, commenced asking for transfers to that other domain. The sounds of agony and suffering were stifled. Many new arrivals, after seeing both places, selected the Nether Region for their permanent abode. Puzzled, St Peter sent messengers to visit Hello and report back to him. They returned all excited and reported to St Peter. 'That engineer you sent down there's said the messenger 'has completely transformed the place so that you would not know it now. He has harnessed the fiery furnaces for light and power. He has cooled the entire place with artificial refrigeration. He has drained the Lake of Brimstone and has filled the air with cool perfumed breezes. He has flung bridges across the Bottomless Abyss and has bored tunnels through the Obsidian Cliffs. He has created paved streets, gardens, parks and playgrounds, lakes, rivers and beautiful waterfalls' 'That engineer you sent down there has gone through Hell and has made of it a realm of happiness, peace and industry!'.....

From the magazine of **Hull Society of Engineers**, c 1937. Author unknown  
*[Please note that your editor is a Chartered Civil Engineer!!!]*

**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.

**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 to check availability (details at the top of page 2.)

**CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF LOGISTICS AND TRANSPORT (CILT)**

**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, 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 offers including competitive insurances through their brokers the Alan Boswell Group; 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> December 2020

The copy deadline is **1<sup>st</sup> November 2020.**

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