

MARLOW - MAIDENHEAD PASSENGERS' ASSOCIATION

Newsletter Number 140
Summer 2008



All Change at MMPA?

The AGM of the MMPA held at Bourne End Community Centre on 14th March has seen some changes in the Committee. After many hard years in the Chairman's hot seat, Nigel Hunt has stood down together with Secretary Allan Machon. Several local representatives have also had to relinquish their positions. As a result a number of new faces were elected to the Committee at the meeting but without specific roles newcomers include Susan Morrison and Paul Murphy from Bourne End and Robert Latham from Maidenhead. At the first Committee meeting held in April Paul Murphy was selected as the new Chairman. Susan Morrison is the new Secretary. Due to absence from that Committee meeting (in France, house – sitting for friends) Robert Latham has returned to find he is the newsletter editor! Richard Porter was re-elected at the A.G.M and now adds the role of Membership Secretary to his existing role as Webmaster. Mark Jameson retains his role as Treasurer. A new Cookham Society representative is being sought as Georgina Kilner did not stand for the post again. There are also vacancies for Station Representatives for Marlow, Bourne End and Furze Platt.

Presentations were received from Richard Rowland for FGW and Paul Robb for Chiltern Railways followed by a general question and answer session.

A few words about new Committee members.

Paul Murphy, Chairman, has been living in Bourne End and using the local trains and buses for around 6 years as he doesn't own a car. He is reliant on local public transport or using his bicycle to get about. For about 3 years he has worked from time to time handing out surveys to rail commuters at stations near and far including all our branch line stations at various times. The surveys have predominantly been for Passenger Focus but also once for the Department for Transport.

He has also worked on contracts to perform market research on trains or at stations for various train companies. Even though never working directly for a train company, he has met many staff members, including managers, through this role. The nature of this work has meant he has gained insight into the issues that face rail passengers. Members of the public are often only too enthusiastic to tell him about why they want to take away a survey to complete and send back!

Paul has served on two committees as Secretary for a number of years and also served as Vice President Education for the Toastmasters Club he belonged to in New Zealand. He is looking forward to leading the MMPA as Chairman and in turn helping members and users of local public transport alike, to gain improvements wherever they're needed.

Susan Morrison, Secretary, has been a resident of Bourne End since early 2007 and is a very active customer of local train and bus services because she does not own a car. She has an MBA in Finance and spent 15 years in commercial and investment banking before setting up an independent financial and human resources consulting business in 1995. Throughout her business career, she has been active with a number voluntary environmental, membership and social service organisations in the US and UK. This involved work both as a grassroots volunteer and as a volunteer Trustee or Board member, including leadership positions for Fundraising, Administration and Treasury. Most recent volunteer roles include Honorary Treasurer and Trustee for The Environment Centre on Holywell Mead in High Wycombe and External Trustee for the Student Union of Buckinghamshire New University.

Robert Latham, Newsletter Editor, is a Chartered Engineer recently entering partial retirement from Network Rail where he is working on the national project to install a fibre optic data transmission and GSM based radio system for driver to signaller communication across the United Kingdom. Career milestones include engineering design of CrossRail (1990s version) and Channel Tunnel Rail Link. He is Chairman of the Thames Valley Group of the Mid Hants Railway Preservation Society for whom he prepares a monthly newsletter. He also writes a newsletter for the Thames Valley Branch of the Norton Owners Club as he owns two old Norton motorcycles.

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Great Western Route Utilisation Strategy

The MMPA is participating in the Wider Stakeholder Group (WSG) for Network Rail's Great Western Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) consultation. The purpose of the RUS is "to make effective and efficient use and development of the route capacity available, consistent with the funding that is, or is reasonably likely to become, available during the period of the RUS".

This differs from the earlier RUS carried out by the now defunct Strategic Rail Authority in that it is expected that further investment will be forthcoming. The new RUS covers all of the FGW routes in England (as far as Pilning on the approach to the Severn Tunnel) and is being carried out in parallel with similar RUSs for the East Midlands, the West Midlands and Chiltern. The final RUSs are scheduled to be published in September 2009. They must of course take account of proposals in other neighbouring regions as well as major projects such as CrossRail and the Reading area remodelling.

The initial meeting of the WSG was to explain the RUS process and set out the timetable. We will keep you informed as it progresses.

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Bourne End Bridge

An enquiry made by an MMPA member regarding the future of the railway bridge across the Thames at Bourne End has elicited a response from the Network Rail Community Relations Manager at Swindon to the effect that:

"I can confirm that the last detailed Examination of the structure was undertaken in 2004 when a Detailed Underwater Examination was also conducted. The structure was found to be adequate for passenger trains therefore no strengthening works were recommended.

Although there is no significant renewal work planned for the structure, there is a proposal for the Viaduct to be painted before the end of 2009... subject to funding approval.

Our plans to paint this large structure (NR's description - Ed) show our commitment to keeping the Viaduct operational and whilst it may not be as strong as it once was, this in part reflects the fact that the number of non-passenger (*i.e. freight - Ed*) which use this structure is now minimal."

While this may answer the short term situation it does sound as though the longer term is under regular review and is dependent on necessary funding.

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Maidenhead Station Upgrade

Those of you who travel from Maidenhead will probably have noticed that the upgrade works promised for so long have at last been started. It may all change again of course when CrossRail is built. Briefly the works include reinstating Platform 1 to allow High Speed services to pick up and set down there again, a ramp down to the Shoppenhangers Road car park, expansion of the Ticket Hall with the provision of more gates with the snack shop moving outside the entrance, extended waiting and toilet facilities to platforms 4 and 5 and refurbishment of the subway although this can never be a total solution as the track bed above cannot be sealed without considerable expenditure.

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New Timetables

With this newsletter we will be distributing copies of the First Great Western mini-timetable leaflets which came into force from 18th May and stay in place until December. The booklets usually sent out covering all the FGW services are not yet available. While the changes to the timetable seem generally minor they are generating problems with connections from the branch at Maidenhead particularly for trains to Reading and Oxford. The Committee is aware of a number of people affected this way and are making representation to FGW for improvements to be incorporated in the December 2008 timetable.

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TRAVEL INFORMATION

BBC RADIO BERKSHIRE - 104.1, 104.4 and 95.4 fm. (also 01189 - 311333)

National Rail enquiries: 08457 - 484950 (24 hrs)

Great Western Telesales : 08457 - 300700 (Mon - Sat)

Chiltern Railways : 08456 - 005165 (0700 - 2000)
Arriva Bus : 01494 - 520941 (0900 - 1730 Mon - Fri)
First Berks & Thames Valley Buses: 01753 524144
Carousel Buses: 01494 533436
Traveline : 0870 - 6082608 (0700 - 2100 daily)
See our web site www.mmpa.org.uk for links.

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Membership Matters

Membership subscriptions are now due for 2008/9. You will find accompanying this newsletter a membership renewal/ data slip giving the details we hold for you on the database. This applies even if you are a Life or Honorary Member or a Complimentary recipient of the Newsletter. Please mark any changes or corrections clearly before returning the slip with the appropriate remittance (if any). If your last renewal is shown as 2008, or if there is a tick after the year then there is nothing to pay, in which case any changes can be alternatively be notified by email to info@mmpa.org.uk.

Please enclose an s.a.e. for your membership card, otherwise it will be sent with the next mailing.

If you would prefer to receive the Newsletter as a PDF file by email, please make sure that your email address is shown correctly and tick the box provided. We will still deliver or send you the timetable booklets if you are in the area, or by request if you have moved away.

The membership fees are unchanged for this year an are £4.00 for individual members, £5.00 for family members (two voting members at the same address) and £3.00 for concessions (under 14 or 65 and over). Cheques should be made payable to "MMPA" and sent to MMPA Membership, 23 Switchback Road North, Maidenhead, SL6 7UF. In case of difficulty please phone Richard Porter on 01628 621614.

If you are a complimentary recipient but no longer wish to receive the Newsletter, or if it should be redirected to a different person in your organization please let us know.

Thank you all for your continued support of the Association, without which it would not exist.

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BECA 500 Club

The Bourne End (Bucks) Community Association has asked us, as an affiliate, to draw your attention to its fund-raising "500 Club". Application forms are available from the Centre office or in the display racks. BECA is a registered charity.

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First Great Western ticket offers

FGW have a number of Rover tickets available – ranging from 3 days travel in 7 days in Devon and Cornwall or Severn and the Solent for £40 to 8 days in 15 for the whole South West for £95.

These tickets are valid for travel after 0900 Mondays to Fridays, and at any time on Saturdays, Sundays or Bank Holidays.

There is also a Thames Rover available at £40 for 3 days and £ 70 for 7 days. This ticket is valid for travel after 0930 Mondays to Fridays and any time on Saturdays, Sundays or Bank Holidays. Full details of validity from FGW.

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