

Marpa

Mid Anglia Rail Passengers' Association
www.marpa.org.uk

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Spring 2024 Newsletter

Dear MARPA member

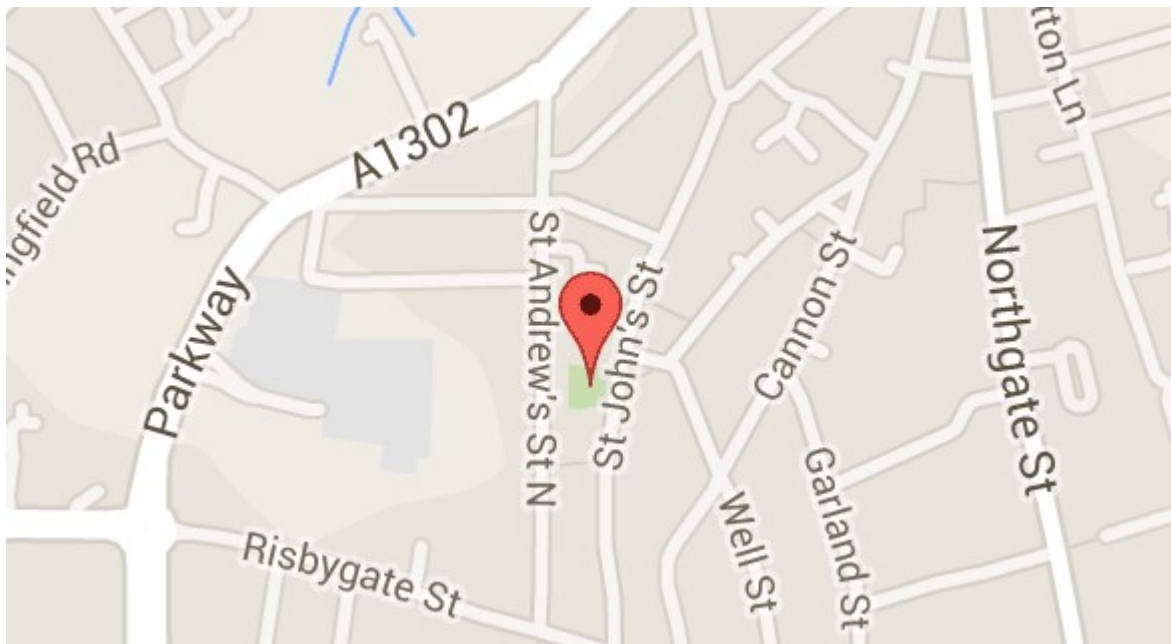
It has been a busy and sad time since John Drake, our Honorary Chairman & Secretary, sadly died in December, we have been dealing with issues arising and preparing for our postponed AGM. It is a full newsletter so please read on.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2023 – POSTPONED FROM OCTOBER DUE TO STORM BABET

The MARPA 2023 AGM takes place at 2.30 pm in the Friends Meeting House in St John's Street Bury St Edmunds on **Saturday 23rd March**. Please do come and meet other people with an interest in our line.

There will be a talk from Alan Neville, Customer Engagement Manager at Greater Anglia, who will outline current and planned developments on the Mid Anglia route, including an update on progress with the long awaited Community Rail Partnership.

Do come along, all are welcome and it is good to put faces to names and to meet new people. There is usually an attendance of over 20 and FREE refreshments are available.



John Drake - 11/03/1941 - 30/12/2023

John died at the end of December 2023 after a short illness, aged 82. His funeral was held at West Suffolk Crematorium on 26 January 2024 and included mourners representing several rail user groups as well as the East Anglian group of the Ffestiniog Railway Society. At the time of his death he was honorary chair of MARPA and until as recently as November 2023 he had also served as secretary for a number of years. Longstanding Railfuture members will also have known John as a member from the days of the Railway Development Society.

A Cambridgeshire boy to his core, John lived in the village of Cheveley near Newmarket for his entire life. After attending Soham Grammar School he went into training as an accountant. As a chartered accountant his expertise was much in demand. Retiring early, he took on private clients and was professionally active until quite recently. In terms of using his skills voluntarily for the benefit of other organisations, John was treasurer for the Ffestiniog Railway East Anglian Group at the time of his death, a role he had conscientiously carried out for over 50 years. He was also honorary auditor for Railfuture East Anglia's accounts for a number of years and served as voluntary auditor for Cheveley PCC.

John had a lifelong interest in preserved railways; apart from his involvement with the Ffestiniog Railway, he was also a member of the Bluebell Railway Preservation Society, Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway, The Railway Correspondence and Travel Society, Friends of the Great Central Main Line and the Poppy Line, North Norfolk Railway.

His principal contribution to the promotion of railways and rail travel was undoubtedly his involvement with MARPA. One of its founder members in 1990 under the aegis of Railfuture - when it was known as MISTA (Mid Suffolk Travellers' Association) - John devoted many hours to the sometimes frustrating work of lobbying for better services and passenger facilities on the Mid Anglia route connecting Ipswich with Cambridge and Ely. That the quality of the service provided has improved immeasurably over the past three decades is in no small way directly the consequence of the work John and other committed volunteers have done in their engagement with the railway industry. The Mid Anglia route goes from strength to strength, and whilst lobbying ambitions still need to be fulfilled - notably an hourly service between Ipswich, Ely, March and Peterborough, as well as the establishment of a Mid Anglia Community Rail Partnership - the high quality of the service available in 2024 reflects John's patient industry and diligence over many years. MARPA members - and particularly those serving on the rail user group's committee - will undoubtedly miss his knowledge and wisdom on matters rail related.

John was unmarried. He leaves behind two sisters, Jean and Sylvia, and four nephews to whom we offer our condolences and best wishes.

Ongoing dialogue over service improvements - outcomes from our latest meeting with Greater Anglia

MARPA members will probably be aware that as part of our efforts to secure a range of improvements to both services and passenger facilities on the route, the elected committee

regularly meets Alan Neville (AN) from GA to raise issues and see where improvements can be made. Our latest discussion took place in December 2023. This is a short summary.

Mid Anglia CRP (Community Rail Partnership) progress

GA: some progress in dialogue between GA & LAs. There are outstanding funding contributions to be agreed. The ambition remains to launch a CRP in 2024.

Prospects for next timetable refresh/rewrite

GA: regional TT, including Mid Anglia route, rewrite 2025 at the earliest... This will follow on from GEML/WAML (Great Eastern/West Anglia Mainline) timetable rewrite during 2024.

Needham/Stowmarket Access for All

GA: some movement on installing new bridge/lift at Stow now likely early 2025, at least a year later than first scheduled. GA plans to submit a similar design as part of its Needham Access for All bid to Dept of Transport early 2024. We know GA has a large number of bids in train - we don't know where Needham sits in the priorities.

Later final train ex-Cambridge

GA: Maybe from 2025 rewrite? Already aware that it cannot be scoped before completion of ongoing Cambridge area re-signalling.

Kennett - take up of new stops & prospects for further services in new timetable

GA: Initial take up looks very good. Case for more stopping trains is clearly robust.

New waiting room on Cambridge platform at Bury St Edmunds

GA: On GA's "aspirational list" - platform too narrow, issue is what lies behind the platform facing doors. AN will pursue and report back.

0921 Ipswich - Cambridge service arriving late at Bury because of late running Felixstowe freight (4M79) - how regularly does the service get delayed to Bury & what can be done to remedy?

GA: Agreed data isn't good, especially in recent months - GA to engage NR to work on this with freight operator. MARPA will continue to monitor the situation, but evidence suggests timekeeping is much improved early 2024.

Crowding on midday/early evening Saturday services when ITFC have home games - likely to become more acute in 2024/5 if current form persists. On GA's radar?

GA: Put on the "wish list" for GA - and yes, the issue of growing numbers of fans travelling to Ipswich in 2024/25 season is already on GA radar.

Is there scope in any timetable revision for later final train from Ipswich to Bury/Cambridge.

GA: Again, possible from 2025. Suggestion also from MARPA that GA look at feasibility of increasing capacity by using longer trains (e.g. 3+4 units) on some very popular services.

MARPA Posters

If you have recently travelled through Cambridge or Bury St Edmunds stations you may have noticed the new posters filling the MARPA display boards. The committee felt the boards were in need of a makeover with some simple information about us and what we do as a rail user group. The posters form a "front door" for MARPA - they will no longer contain printed newsletters etc, but instead provide a link to the website where up to date news can be accessed, as well as the secretary's email contact. Hopefully people will find the new poster both informative and visually interesting. Greater Anglia has generously provided the posters at

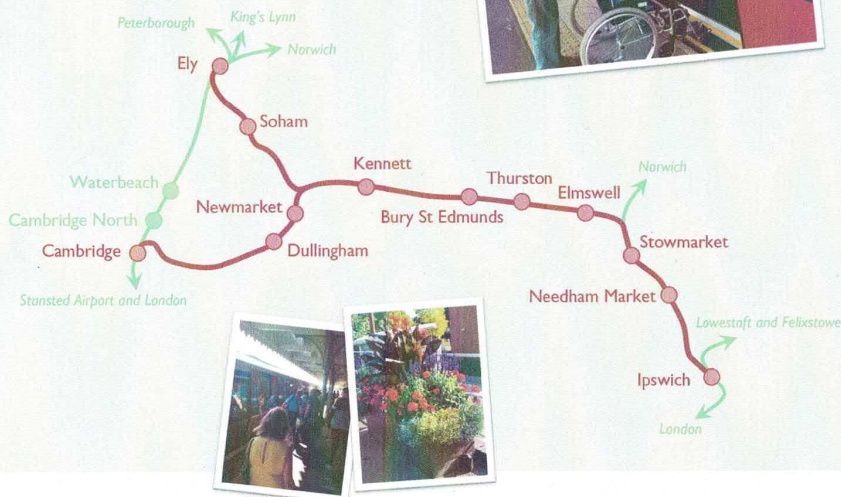
no cost to MARPA. The aim is to get the new posters installed at Ipswich, Newmarket and Stowmarket as soon as possible. The poster map is courtesy of Paul Hollinghurst at Railfuture and the accompanying images are from MARPA secretary Peter Feeney and Railfuture's Chris Burton.

Do you travel regularly on the Mid Anglia route from this station?

As the voice of passengers using rail services between Ipswich and Cambridge and Ely/Peterborough, **MARPA** works to secure improvements to services and facilities through regular dialogue with Greater Anglia and Network Rail.

Taking on issues raised by members and others using the railway, our campaigns have helped secure an hourly Sunday service for the line, improved access at Bury station and more services stopping at Kennett. We continue to lobby for improved access for all travellers at stations along the route.

Longer term, our efforts are focused on getting more frequent services and faster journey times for passengers.



MARPA is the Mid Anglia Rail Passengers' Association

For information and membership details, contact secretary@marpa.org.uk

www.marpa.org.uk

MARPA is affiliated to **railfuture**
Campaigning for a Regain better railway

Mid Anglia passenger numbers - upward trend continues

Data on station usage for the year to 31 March 2023 has recently been published by the Office of Road & Rail (ORR). The figures for the Mid Anglia route stations in the chart below omit Ipswich & Cambridge, since their huge footfalls obviously include travellers using other routes. By the same token, bear in mind that the data for Stowmarket includes passengers using the hourly intercity service to and from Liverpool Street. That said, with the exception of Dullingham, all stations have seen footfall increases of approximately 20% plus since 2022. This includes Kennett, even prior to the recent additional stopping services. And who knows what increases in passenger numbers might occur at Dullingham with an hourly service? Elmswell and Thurston's

expanding numbers doubtless reflect the growing local populations prompted by large scale house building. We now have a number of stations where annual passenger numbers are close to 100,000.

The continued growth in usage at Bury St Edmunds - now close to 700,000 annually - adds weight to the case for Greater Anglia to increase investment in passenger facilities, notably the need for waiting room and toilet facilities on the Cambridge platform. Finally, it's also worth remarking that on the Peterborough route, Soham - in its first full year of operation (opened December 2021) - has recorded a footfall of over 55,000. Not bad for a two hourly service. And surely further compelling evidence for increased frequency on Ipswich - Peterborough services.

		<u>Year to 31st March</u>					% change 2023 to:	
Station	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2018	2022
Needham Market	100,648	102,320	100,754	33,484	79,196	94,148	-6	19
Stowmarket	935,244	967,114	916,094	185,762	615,232	764,552	-18	24
Elmswell	68,546	71,078	71,050	13,570	67,164	91,892	34	37
Thurston	72,388	77,592	71,562	15,688	76,036	95,720	32	26
Bury St. Edmunds	652,084	665,112	657,942	151,514	564,972	698,282	7	24
Kennett	39,512	42,684	42,516	9,408	36,538	43,782	11	20
Newmarket	358,798	355,068	335,652	77,602	255,860	303,332	-15	19
Dullingham	39,028	41,832	35,086	10,842	22,798	25,314	-35	11
ALL EAST ANGLIA							-16	33

MARPA Membership

If you have **NOT** renewed for the year **2024** please do so now! Reminders have been sent by email to current members . . . **so** please renew, as your membership is valued by us and the subscription is vital if we are to continue to campaign in support of issues on our local rail routes that members feel strongly about.

Our bank account will allow direct payment of subscriptions via BACS. In order to pay direct into our account please use

Sort Code 52-30-31. Our bank is Nat West, account name MARPA

Account number 49892002

PLEASE, PLEASE give your name and add 'SUBS' when you make any online payment, that will really help us to identify your payment on an internet-based account!

Finally, you can still send cheques if you prefer. Please make your cheque payable to 'Mid Anglia Rail Passengers Association' and post to the address below.

Lloyd Butler

14 Ghent Field Circle

Thurston

Suffolk

IP31 3UP

Annual Membership Subscription Rates:

Adult - £5.00

Family/Joint - £6.00

Concession - £4.00

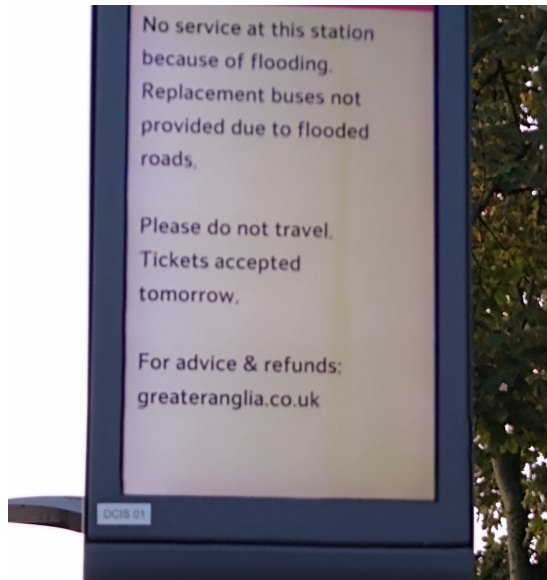
(Student / Senior / Unwaged / Disabled)

Corporate - £25.00

Please renew your subscription by getting in touch with Membership Secretary Lloyd Butler.
Email membership@marpa.org.uk or write to him at the above address.

WEB SITE REMINDER

Please visit/use our website www.marpa.org.uk



The information that forced us to postpone the October AGM



Freight train delayed around **2 days** at Elmswell by Storm Babet as lines flooded at Stowmarket