

WHAT'S ON (all phone numbers are 0117 unless shown)

Saturday 12 June

Meet Ramblers in Temple Meads forecourt at 10.50 for an 8 mile tour of eighteenth century Bristol. 973 3059

Saturday 12 June

FOSBR monthly meeting starts at 17.45 (on the arrival of 16.50 train from Severn Beach). **Agenda:** FOSBR website. Dave Redgwell, Executive member of South West Labour Party, on Bristol Local Transport Plan. To attend the meeting, walk from Temple Meads Station down Approach Road to the metal rail on right, then down steps to the Great Western Staff Club. We finish in time to catch the 19.31 train.

Sunday 13 June Stall at Bristol's Biggest Bike Ride in Brunel Way Park.

Saturday 3 July

Catch 10.22 from Temple Meads to Bath (buy a return to Avoncliff) to meet up with Ramblers for delightful 10 – 12 miles walk along canal and river Avon. Return on 16.38. 01225 761496 or 07971 220093

Sunday 4 July Stall at Music in St Andrews Park 1.30 – 7.30pm

Saturday 10 July

FOSBR monthly meeting (see June). Deadline for August newsletter.

FOSBR Passenger Watch Dog welcomes the new layout of Wessex Trains Timetables which show connections (and lack of) on the same page. Wessex Specials carries up to 25 bikes, leaves BTM at 0828 on weekdays and 0858 on Saturdays. It leaves Weymouth at 17.18 (weekdays) and 17.22 (Saturdays). The 08.45 from Severn Beach on Saturdays connects with the 10.00 from TM to Weston. FOSBR Watch Dog continues to monitor bustitution. 14 – 28 June replacement bus service is likely to be disastrous. Check out www.sra.gov.uk for consultation on bikes.

F O S B R CONTACTS

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FOSBR NEWSLETTER



Newsletter 45

June 2004

Passengers on the Severn Beach Line find the service “fast, convenient, stress free and relatively inexpensive but it is infrequent, subject to delays and cancellations; poorly provided for in terms of provision and safety facilities” (www.fabermaunsell.com **Bristol – Avonmouth – Filton – Study, 2003**). But the study gives no figures for cancellations and no figures for operating costs. Amazingly, it claims that the Sunday Service in 1998-9 “generated a poor level of demand”. Not true. There were trains on only three Sundays, paid for by Bristol City Council. They were packed. Was the purpose of this study to end our local rail service?

Cancellations were considered a disaster under British Rail. Despite annual dollops of public money to Wessex Trains and smaller dollops from Bristol City Council (to run an hourly weekday off peak service), there are cancellations. The reason? Wessex does not employ enough train drivers. The solution? Rob the Beach Line.

Despite these problems, passenger numbers have increased by 78% over 10 years. But this is not reflected in ticket sales. Guards cannot cope with 80 people boarding the 08.05, for example, at Stapleton Road and 65 at Montpelier Station 3 minutes later.

Mainline trains will run on the Henbury Line through Avonmouth from 14 – 28 June. FOSBR continues to campaign for use of this line permanently in order to create a half hourly service between Avonmouth and Temple Meads.

Rail must be prioritised in the new Bristol Local Transport Plan with more main line trains stopping at suburban stations. Recently, Jean Corston MP got a train re-instated for her commuting constituents. School students have a tradition of promoting the line.

14 year old George Buxton reports on the 2004 steam excursion (see over). In 1964 Michael Tarr, a 14 year old living in Sea Mills printed, and distributed, pocket train timetables. In the seventies, schoolboy Chris Green challenged the official figures for local rail and became active in the highly successful Rail Passenger Group. The battle for rail in Bristol lives on.

Julie Boston

Exploring the Forgotten Avon Railways

On a calm Sunday lunchtime, my friend Alex and I boarded a train for Portbury from Bristol Temple Meads. Yes, you did hear correctly. A train to Portbury. But this, alas, was not a regular occurrence but, in fact, a steam excursion run by Pathfinder Tours for those who wanted to reminisce about days gone by, and those who (like myself) wanted to see some of the lesser-known beauty spots of our County by rail.

With a puff, a whistle and a wave we were off, past smiling photographers on Bedminster station and interested gardeners on their Ashton allotments. We saw the Avon Gorge from the "other" railway line, before passing beneath the imposing M5 and into Portbury Dock. There, our work began. The train manager announced to the passengers that "two FOSBR representatives would be shortly passing through the train, distributing literature regarding the local rail network". By the end, we had only got six leaflets remaining, out of a starting total of 275. One lady enquired about the trains to Severn Beach, and, following a brief description, smiled and said that she would be travelling the following day. We also got a positive response from the West Somerset Railway, who have since joined up with FOSBR. After returning to Temple Meads, we then went out to Tytherington and back.

This goes to show just what a wonderful rail network Bristol **could** have, if only the Politics Express would stop blowing its bureaucratic steam, which is impairing the drive towards improvement. The message is simple: the tracks are laid, the demand is there, and all we need is a bit of imagination before trains return to these abandoned arteries.

George Buxton

Walking the way to Health - Severn Beach Walk

A total of 28 walkers used the Severn Beach Line for their walk on Tuesday 4th May 2004. The walkers were from two groups - The Amblers Healthy Walking Group covering Barton Hill, Redfield, Lawrence Hill & the Dings and the Easton Healthy Walking Group.

The Amblers Group caught the 10.34 from Lawrence Hill Station and met up with the Easton Group who got on a couple of minutes later at Stapleton Road Station and two walkers joined the train at Redland and Clifton Down Stations.

Arriving at Severn Beach after using the train with bus link an enjoyable walk was had along the promenade with magnificent views of the estuary and the Severn Bridges. The hour long walk in windy conditions ended with the walkers catching the 12.40 bus from Severn Beach to connect with the 13.00 train at Avonmouth Station. On this homeward

journey we enjoyed the lovely views of the River Avon and Leigh Woods which this railway line gives you. Some of the walkers had not travelled on this line before and many had not used it for sometime.

At our destinations of Stapleton Road and Lawrence Hill Stations all the walkers thanked our Health Walks Leader Nicola Ferris and her helpers for a really interesting and enjoyable train/walking combined day out. I am sure we will be using the Severn Beach Line again as other good walks can be had from other stations on the line.

Dave Williams.

Our Life Line

During the last year I have become a great fan and critic of the Severn Beach Railway, and it has been a relief to find in FOSBR others similarly afflicted! I had the privilege of attending one of the FOSBR monthly meetings at Temple Meads and was asked to write a few words for the newsletter.

I have lived in Bristol for over 30 years, first living as a medical student in Clifton and now working as a GP in Avonmouth. I was a GP in Southmead for 20 years, but left in 2002 to take a job in industry. That didn't last long and in 2003 I decided to return to general practice. I also wanted to lead a healthier life, take more exercise and use my car less. I talked to other cycling GPs and started taking my bike on the train from Montpelier to Avonmouth. I cycle around my visits. Sometimes if the visit is in Sneyd Park or Stoke Bishop and the "time is right" I may take the train to Sea Mills before cycling up the hill!

The journey to and from work is now an enjoyable part of my day. Smiling and friendly conductors, fellow commuters are now "nodding acquaintances", the green fields, the trees and of course the ever changing River Avon; a satisfying journey indeed. But....

Wouldn't it be great if the trains ran more than once an hour, that they ran more, not less frequently, at peak times, that there were improved links to other bus & rail services, Broadmead, Cribbs Causeway, and other parts of our city and beyond? It must be possible and I look forward to joining with others to help make it happen.

Jon Rogers

Lack of innovative thinking, among bodies such as the Strategic Rail Authority, has allowed our railways to decline – so it's up to rail campaigners everywhere to promote the permanent way. Contact Transport Supremo :- Anne_white@bristol-city.gov.uk; your local MP and councillor and Nigel.hutchings@businesswest.co.uk Distributes FOSBR pocket leaflet.