All Change for Framlingham

Canon David Pitcher
Rector of Framlingham 1976 - 1991
Pupil at the College
and
Traveller on the Flyer 1944 - 1951

Acknowledgements.

The Suffolk Record Office at Ipswich is a superb resource for all researchers and I am very grateful to members of their staff who were always helpful on my many visits there, especially for the purposes of examining *The Framlingham Weekly News*, on film, from the date of its first publication until the outbreak of WW2 when it closed down.

Another fascinating publication is the *Great Eastern Journal*, produced quarterly by the GER Society. This is an essential organisation for research into the GER and LNER story and evolution.

There is nothing like the oral tradition for supplying the knowledge and feeling of times past and, at the risk of not naming them all, I am specially grateful to the following Framlinghamians and nearby friends for their reminiscences. They include Geoffrey Clarke senior, Sid Vice and Tony Webb; Alan Howard, Bill Flemming and Ted Etheridge; Stanley Baines, Luke Dowsing and Jim Nunn; Katherine Douglas, Pat Burtt, Barbara Alcock, Joan Lowe, Ada Frost and John Gray; David Clark for his help with the Parham Plum; Jo Oldfield and Olwin Bridges; members of the family of the late Mr and Mrs Cecil Salter who lived and worked from Broadwater Crossing Keeper's house; also Nancy Bowen, Ernie Finbow and Winnie Carr now deceased.

It has taken many years, a little at an irregular time, to gather the strands of this story together and I am very grateful to Messrs Charles Seeley and Lesley Gillett, and to John McEwan and other members of the Framlingham and District Local History and Preservation Society for their help and encouragement. Simon Pitcher, my elder son, has been essential in his vetting the story and correcting the technical details.

This account is not very long and hardly does justice to the years and experiences it tries to record but it has thoroughly absorbed my interest and enthusiasm, even though it has been a cause of astonishment to my wife, Helen, who has been generously patient and understanding.

Best wishes
David Pitcher.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The richest resource for any account of Framlingham life in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is *The Framlingham Weekly News, Railway Gazette and East Suffolk Advertiser*, first published on 3 September 1859, at a penny a copy.

It was promoted "throughout the neighbourhood of Framlingham, Wickham Market, Debenham, Stradbroke, Laxfield, Peasenhall, Saxmundham, Leiston and Southwold."

Weekly events and happenings were set in the context of well reported news, from an agency, of events in other parts of the country and overseas. Its front page, filled with delightful advertisements, reflect the changes in taste and fashion over a period of 80 years.

For the first excursion, in 1860, "the various stations on our branch line presented a very interesting appearance of hundreds of gaily dressed pleasure seekers who were determined to patronise the first cheap trip and spend a day at the seaside. Of the 2,500 that entered Yarmouth, nearly a thousand were supplied by our branch line, including Campsea Ashe where about 500, with 300 at Saxmundham," had to come on the next train.

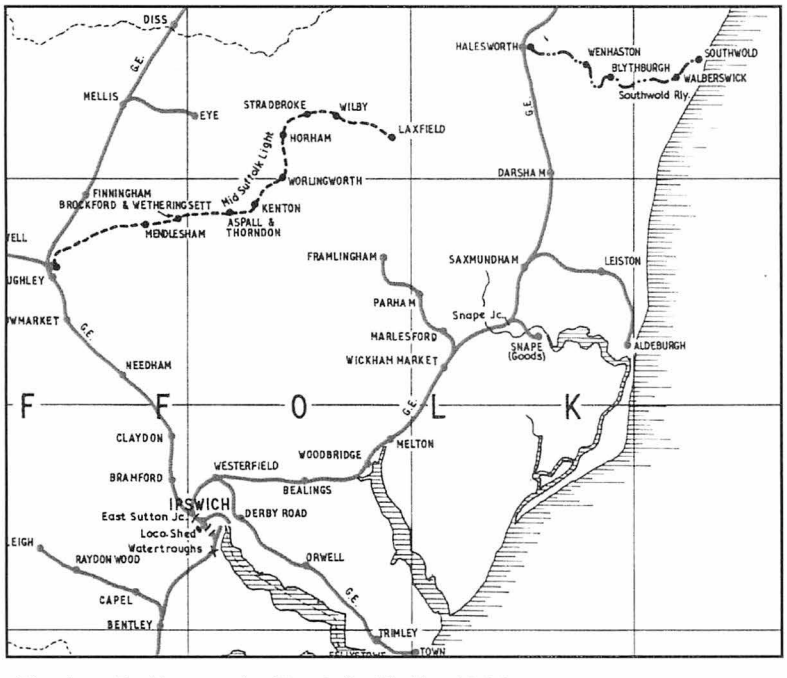


Fig.1 Railways in East Suffolk, 1922.

From 1 June 1859, when the branch line was opened, the prosperity of Framlingham grew in every facet of its industrial, commercial and social life.

The last reference to the Framlingham Branch Line was in May 1938, sixteen months before *The Framlingham Weekly News* ceased publication. There were four references of equal but not economically rewarding interest and all were advertisements for excursion specials. The first was for supporters travelling to Ipswich to watch Division 3 South matches at Portman Road, the second

London at 5/9d. return, the third and fourth being excursions to the coast for the Easter and Whitsun bank holidays.

Five trains daily from Framlingham were advertised in 1859 with, usually, a change at Campsea Ashe.

At 6.50am, 11.40am, 4.30pm, for Ipswich, Hadleigh, Harwich, Sudbury, Maldon, Braintree, and London.

At 7.10pm for Ipswich and Colchester

At 6.50am & 2.45pm for Lowestoft and Yarmouth, with a change for Norwich.

At 11.40am & 7.10pm for Lowestoft and Yarmouth.

At 6.50am for Bury St. Edmunds, Cambridge and Peterborough, changing at Ipswich.

At 4.30pm for Ipswich and changing for Bury St. Edmunds.

The freight traffic continued to make the line economically viable and the passenger traffic was saved by the outbreak of WW2. The story of the years between 1939 and 1952 is largely from local oral tradition, Doctor Ian Allen in particular; the latter also provided the record of the years of diesel hauled freight traffic until final closure in 1964.

Chapter 2

BIRTH OF THE RAILWAY

Framlingham's local transport before 1859

In his smaller book, A *Guide to Framlingham*, Richard Green tells the account of an alarming accident which dramatically ended opposite the stone cottages and the entrance to Broadwater House, then occupied by Mr John Pierson.

He writes that in the 1840s to 1851 the landlord at the Crown and Anchor was Mr Bloss who decided to run a coach service to Wickham Market to provide a link between Framlingham and the main coach services between Yarmouth and Ipswich, following the old A12 and on to London.

On one occasion the coach set off, without a driver, down Fairfield Road for the White Hart on Wickham Market Square, the horses having been whipped into action by the shrieks of excitement from some young ladies who had seats on the top of the coach. All attempts to halt the coach were in vain until they reached the approach to the twisting turn and narrow bridge at Broadwater where Mr Henry Fuller managed to jump at one horse and stop the coach. He was severely hurt and one horse had to be killed but the girls were saved.

It is easy to imagine the effect this might have had on John Pierson who was the main figure in making sure that Framlingham did have a branch line built a few years later, and who was the most active resident of the town for its survival at a time when Framlingham was being left behind in the development of nineteenth-century industry. He died in December 1881 and in his obituary it was reported that "to him the inhabitants of this town owe their thanks for the railway, for unless he had worked early and late and conquered the opposition and apathy that existed, we should not have had our branch line."

It was not until after the arrival of private motoring that the road from Stowmarket to Yoxford, the A1120, was made into anything like a usable cross country road for the middle of East Suffolk. Framlingham, whose population had veered between 2,500 and 3,000 for the previous 200 years, if not more, is the only town of any size anywhere near that route to the A12 but had remained isolated from main mail coach routes.

In 1829 there had been published Pigot's Directory and one list gave the names of carriers who were the trade link between Framlingham and the outside world. Samuel Wightman was the main carrier of groceries and other commodities for local traders and he brought goods which had arrived by sea, at either Woodbridge or Ipswich, including coal. Occasional direct meat supplies to London were taken by other carriers and it was possible to get a seat to London for anyone prepared to travel with the carcases on a two days and nights journey in a wagon!

Other transport depended on the few private horse drawn vehicles and a very modest selection of occasional coach services to places within ten miles of the town.

A Business Plan

On 6 August 1853, Sir Morton Peto, whose bust has been recently presented to Norwich Thorpe station, agreed to help Lord Stradbroke and other Suffolk landowners in the building of the East Suffolk Railway. The East Suffolk Railway Act of July 3rd, 1854, authorised the construction, including the various branches such as that to Framlingham.The planned operating revenue was based on expectations such as the transport of the steam and other machinery from Garretts at Leiston, and machinery being produced by Whitmore and Binyon at Wickham Market. Further hopes were vested in winning the river-bound traffic to and from Snape Maltings.

Whitmore and Binyon did not survive beyond 1919 not least, perhaps, because the population of Wickham Market did not want the railway near to the town but also because Lord Hamilton did not want the route over his estate in Easton. It was because of these objections that Framlingham nearly lost all connection with the railway system, the original route being planned to go from Woodbridge to Framlingham and then to Sweffling and Saxmundham on a more westerly route than the one ultimately built.

Snape Maltings did not use the railway to the same extent as was hoped for although, after the growing of sugar beet became common practice, the yard at Snape station earned the reputation of handling the largest tonnage of beet in East Anglia. Garrett's never completely recovered from the shock of the Russian Revolution just after they had sent shipments of engines and equipment there for which they never received any payment.

Fig.2 Station yard, c.1950, showing pens, bonded warehouse, platform and extension, coal yard and station building, from roof of EG Clarke's warehouse. Alan Howard.

For other goods traffic on the East Suffolk Railway it was planned to charge threepence a ton per mile for fish, for horses and cattle twopence each per mile, for calves, pigs and sheep a penny each per mile, for coal three-farthings a mile per ton, for manure and road stone a penny a mile per ton, for boilers and machinery and timber up to sixpence a ton, per mile, and any article over eight tons at a price to be negotiated.

For passenger traffic some people took their own carriages, on flat wagons, for which the charge was to be sixpence a ton per mile, the passengers riding inside them as in the Channel Tunnel today! Other first class travellers paid threepence a mile, twopence for second class and a penny for third.

A Building Plan

As *The Framlingham Weekly News* was not published until the autumn of 1859, reports of the opening of the line on 1 June 1859, and other correspondence and articles before this date were reported in the *Ipswich Journal*.

i. 8 November 1853

"The Halesworth, Beccles and Hadiscoe Railway, from Westhall near Halesworth to Woodbridge, with branch railways or tramways to Leiston, Snape Bridge, and Framlingham; change of name of company, traffic arrangements with Eastern Union Railway Company. Amendment of Acts.

"Notice is hereby given that application is intended to be made to Parliament in the next session for an act to authorise the construction and maintenance of the railway and tramways hereafter mentioned, and all proper stations, works, approaches and conveniences connected therewith respectively.

"That is to say ... Halesworth to Hadiscoe, Saxmundham to Leiston, Farnham to Snape and ... also a railway commencing via a junction with the said first mentioned intended railway at or near a field called White Walk belonging to Louisa Shaldon and Frederick William Schreiber and in the occupation of Henry Tillett, situated in the parish of Campsea Ashe, on the South East side of a road or lane, leading from Wickham Market by Blackstock Wood to Blaxhall and terminating at or near a field called Mill Field belonging to and in the occupation of Edmund Goodwyn, and situated in the parish of Framlingham in the said County of Suffolk, on the West side of the road leading from Framlingham to Wickham Market. Which said intended railway will pass from, in and through or be situate within the several parishes, townships and extra parochial or other places following, or some of them. That is to say, Campsea Ashe, Blaxhall, Little Glemham, Marlesford, Hacheston, Easton, Parham and Framlingham, all in the county of Suffolk."

ii. 26 February 1859.

A report of a meeting of the East Suffolk Railway Company, which took place at Halesworth, expressed disappointment that the Eastern Union line from Ipswich to Woodbridge was still unfinished.

Special trains, the first to run on the East Suffolk Railway, took shareholders to Halesworth. The train from Woodbridge left the main line at Campsea Ashe and came to Framlingham. In all the excitement at this first visit the only shareholder passenger mentioned was Mr Pierson. The shareholders train did not divert along any of the other branches.

It was reported that the East Suffolk Railway had cost £450,000 to build and it was agreed that Sir Morton Peto's Company extend the Leiston branch to Aldeburgh as soon as possible. Meanwhile the official opening would take place on 13 March 1859, subject to the completion of buildings and the government inspector's approval. These further costs and the expense incurred for locomotives and rolling stock approximately doubled the total investment.

iii.2 & 4 May 1859

Two letters sent on these dates to the Ipswich Journal reflect the increasing frustration at the time because of the delay in completing the Ipswich to Woodbridge length by the Eastern Union Railway Company. The disputes of competing companies looked like the consequence of opposition to Sir Morton Peto's grand vision to link Yarmouth and Lowestoft trade, including fish, to the Midlands and London and to the other East Anglian ports without competition. He was very largely responsible for the development of Lowestoft docks, trade with Scandinavia and the low countries, and the increase of holiday traffic from the Midlands.

The Ipswich Journal of 4 June 1859 reported the events of the 1st June as follows:

"The Framlingham branch of this line was opened on Wednesday last to this town, for passengers and goods traffic, much to the gratification of the public, many persons availing themselves of the novelty in this part of the county of a trip by rail in the course of the day; but owing to the short notice given of the intended opening, and former disappointments in its being opened, as had been repeatedly reported, ample time was not afforded the inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood of preparing such a demonstration as had been intended had due notice been given of the day of opening.

"The bells rang merrily throughout the day, a cricket match was played, and a tea was provided by Mr John Pipe of the Crown Inn, in his usual style, of which about 40 of the gentry and inhabitants of the town partook; appropriate speeches were made, songs sung, and a merry and convivial evening spent, John Pierson Esq. presided, EG Goodwyn Esq. occupying the vice chair."

A concert was also advertised to take place at half past eight in the evening at the Corn Exchange, by the site of the present Barclays Bank building, but "owing to a serious accident (which it was at one time apprehended would terminate fatally) at the railway station here on the arrival of the 1.10 Parliamentary train occurring to the leader of the instrumental performers, Mr Edward Plantin (who had recently been appointed to a situation at the same station here as light porter), it was unavoidably postponed and notice of which was immediately given by the Town Crier.

"It is but due to the driver of the engine, by which the accident above referred to happened, to state that not the slightest blame can be attributed to him as he did all in his power, by reversing the engine the moment he saw the perilous position of the injured man; and had he not done so, Mr Plantin must inevitably have been cut in two."

This macabre scene was then moved to the White Horse where Dr GE Jeaffreson ministered to him with his surgical skills, "although we fear that through the internal injuries he has sustained it will be some time before he is enabled to resume his duties".

Alas, *The Ipswich Journal* reported on 6 June: "We regret to learn that Mr Edward Plantin, who met with a severe accident at the railway station, died on Monday last from the internal injuries received. An inquest was held before Coroner CC Brooke Esq. at the White Horse Inn on Tuesday evening when a verdict of accidental death was returned. The foreman of the jury requested that it might be appended to the verdict, as the common verdict of the jury, that there was no blame whatever with anyone connected with the railway company."

Early Travelling Experience

Mention of a Parliamentary train shows that the company complied with the requirement that cheap third class fares be available on off peak trains, calling at all stations. The travelling conditions of these cheap trains were very cold and uncomfortable in open carriages, as *Punch* once described it:

An open box.....a cattle truck,
Exposed to wind, and rain, and muck,
The flap-door falls-a raking plane
Up which you run your track to gain;
Within, you stand, a herd of swine-
This on a first class London line.

A Framlinghamian, in 1867, gave a memorable understatement: "The air was very keen".

The contrast of the early days with those of the 1890s is well described by the editor of the *The Framlingham Weekly News* in the edition published on 17 March 1894:

"The methods and manner of travelling have undergone marvellous changes during 65 years in the history of Framlingham, and nearly all other towns as well ... in the early days of railway travelling open trucks were the only accommodation afforded to third class passengers, and no seating provided neither; if you sat down it was upon your own box or bag. This was followed by a seated out and covered carriage with open sides, which was considered to be a great improvement upon the 'truck'. But there are many who can remember the torrents of wind, rain and dust with feelings even now akin to pain.....Then followed closed-in carriages with latticed sides; then glazed doors; and then glazed side windows! And improvements have gradually been introduced in the shape of cushioned seats, gas, foot warmers, hat racks, curtains, pictures, ventilators etc. so that travelling by the GER is now a real comfort to the third class man or woman; and as luxurious as anyone can reasonably desire," and the Great Eastern can claim real credit for being the first railway company to introduce dining cars for third class passengers. Today's traveller will often lament, "those were the days!" In 1899 *Punch* put it into verse again, under the title "Third class 1899":

A carpet floor-a cushioned seat-
A toilet service-all complete:
A sixty-mile an hour feed-
A table d'hote in spite of speed;
A chair in which to sleep or smoke;
All things to ease the travelling yoke;
The panorama rushes by-
A picture pleasing to the eye;
The woods, the streams; the fields, the hills,
Announcing every kind of pills;
You read them all and cannot tell
The pill that's best to keep you well;
So go to sleep before you're flustered,
And dream you're taking "Beecham's Mustard."

Although the 'navvies' or navigators who built the railway did what others designed and planned, they were the people who physically changed the face of rural England more radically than any others in our history. Others carried the risks of investment, but to the navvies belonged the deaths, accidents, desperate living conditions and outrageous rules of engagement in that unique civil engineering work.

In Suffolk they did not incur the extreme rigours of tunnelling through rock and crossing the wilderness of the Pennines in the depths of winter, though two of them collapsed and died of sunstroke when work began near Woodbridge. No doubt they were not all shining lights of virtue but they remain among the heroes of those who built the railways.

So far as the Framlingham branch line is concerned there seems to be little evidence but Sir Morton Peto, the main contractor, was a committed Baptist who sincerely tried to do justice to his work-force and gave employment

to some 800 unemployed Suffolk men while the East Suffolk line followed its fairly uncomplicated course.

There may be one piece of material evidence of the life-style of the Framlingham 'navvies'. One of the residents of the houses at the end of Station road once dug up the rusty barrel of a home-made shotgun alongside the track which ran past the end of their back gardens. To this might be added the story of a man brought before the Framlingham Petty sessions, charged with trespass on land in Parham and Hacheston. When arrested he said, "I'm lookin for a rabbit."

One problem with building the branch line, which delayed the final opening of the East Suffolk line, concerned the flooding of the track by the river at Parham. In the end a contingent of Peto's men had to re-direct the course of the river. To this day there are three parts of the original river course that regularly become ponds in wet weather, and the considerable flooding behind Parham and Hacheston in the rains of the Autumn and Winter in 2000 showed how difficult this length of railway engineering had been.

Early Success, and Tourism

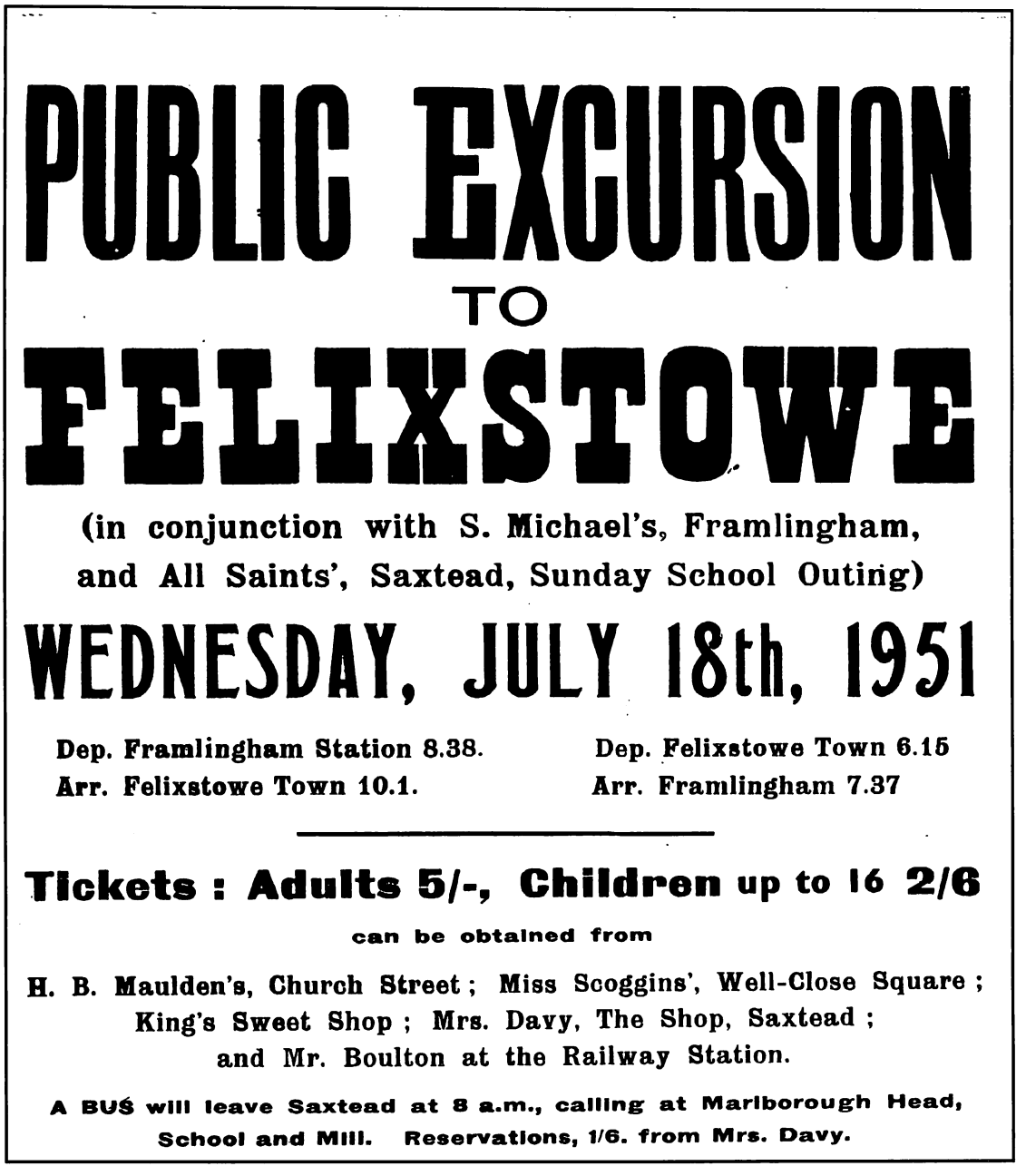
Five months after opening it was reported, "On account of a great increase of goods traffic on our branch line, an extra goods train runs daily. We understand the amount of business and number of receipts of the company have been beyond expectation; and the line bids fair to be a modern branch not only in the beauty and the structure of its buildings, and picturesque views and landscapes, but also in the returns of business transacted and passengers carried."

In the same November it was proudly announced, "We understand upon good authority that the passenger and traffic receipts at our station are equal to those of Saxmundham and Woodbridge combined."

Framlingham was clearly enjoying its entry into the then modern world, especially as the branch line suddenly made available all the developing seaside resorts, easy access to Ipswich and London, to Yarmouth and Norwich, for anyone and everyone. It is essential to understand what a sense of freedom and pleasure was released and served by the branch line, in common with every other railway extension in rural East Anglia. The same experience was celebrated by the artist Monet whose many lovely paintings of Parisiennes enjoying the French countryside nearly all include a puff of smoke, a signal or a railway bridge.

In September it was claimed that, "a more romantic and interesting spot for a gypsey party cannot be found in the whole County of Suffolk and we have often wondered that the Great Eastern Railway has not made a market of Framlingham Castle by running a weekly excursion train from all parts of the line." More recently English Heritage had a poster, at Heathrow Airport, welcoming tourists from overseas to the delights of a visit to the Castle.

In 1888 the GER did produce its first Tourist Guide to East Anglia, but meanwhile there had been no lack of outings and specials to Felixstowe, Aldeburgh Regatta, Yarmouth races, and regular Monday outings to the coast. The first schools excursion, to Aldeburgh, was in June 1865 at 6d. each for a return ticket; it was organised by the clergy of Worlingworth, Bedfield and Southolt and the hope was declared that "other clergymen will follow in their wake." By the time the children reached home again, after the rail and two rough road journeys in a horse drawn cart, they must have been exhausted, but still excited!



PUBLIC EXCURSION
TO
FELIXSTOWE

(in conjunction with S. Michael's, Framlingham,
and All Saints', Saxtead, Sunday School Outing)

WEDNESDAY, JULY 18th, 1951

Dep. Framlingham Station 8.38. Dep. Felixstowe Town 6.15
Arr. Felixstowe Town 10.1. Arr. Framlingham 7.37

Tickets : Adults 5/-, Children up to 16 2/6

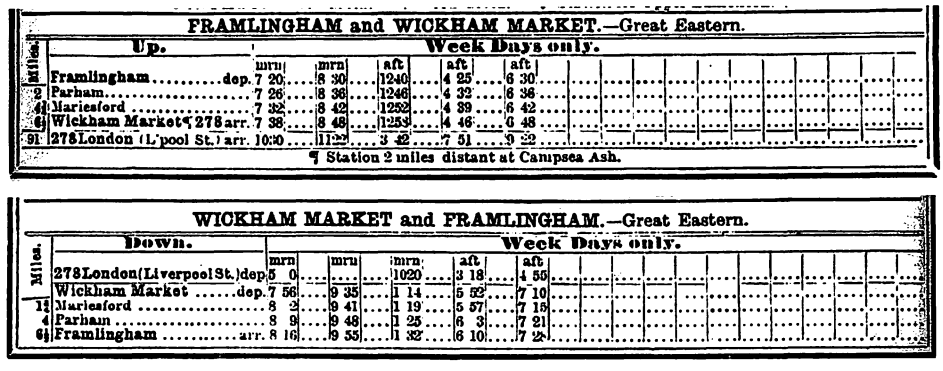
can be obtained from

H. B. Maulden's, Church Street ; Miss Scoggins', Well-Close Square ;
King's Sweet Shop ; Mrs. Davy, The Shop, Saxtead ;
and Mr. Boulton at the Railway Station.

A BUS will leave Saxtead at 8 a.m., calling at Marlborough Head,
School and Mill. Reservations, 1/6. from Mrs. Davy.

Fig.3 The last poster advertising a special day trip. Leslie Heron, printer.

For 35 years rail travel increased and was supreme but 1921 seems to have been a critical year for tourism by rail, despite a eulogy in the *The Framlingham Weekly News* entitled "Aspects of the country-side from a carriage window." In 1922 the GER even published a booklet on the rearing of poultry as a way of publicising its own services. The importance of



FRAMLINGHAM and WICKHAM MARKET.—Great Eastern.

Miles	Up.	Week Days only.				
		mrn	mrn	aft	aft	aft
	Framlingham ..... dep.	7 20	8 30	1240	4 25	6 30
2	Parham	7 26	8 36	1246	4 32	6 36
4½	Mariesford	7 32	8 42	1252	4 39	6 42
6¾	Wickham Market ¶ 278 arr.	7 38	8 48	1258	4 46	6 48
91	278 London (L'pool St.) arr.	10 30	11 22	3 42	7 51	9 22

¶ Station 2 miles distant at Campsea Ash.

WICKHAM MARKET and FRAMLINGHAM.—Great Eastern.

Miles.	Down.	Week Days only.				
		mrn	mrn	mrn	aft	aft
	278 London (Liverpool St.) dep.	5 0		1020	3 18	4 55
	Wickham Market ..... dep.	7 56	9 35	1 14	5 52	7 10
1¾	Mariesford	8 2	9 41	1 19	5 57	7 15
4	Parham	8 9	9 48	1 25	6 3	7 21
6¾	Framlingham ..... arr.	8 16	9 55	1 32	6 10	7 28

Fig. 4 Bradshaw's 1922 timetable of Framlingham Branch

the poultry in Framlingham railway history will become apparent later but the painful nature of the rest of this publication was grim: e.g.,

> Said Gollywog to Mary Jane, My very dearest dolly,
> I'm going to take you in the train, now will that not be jolly?
> So put your shoes upon your feet, and wash your little hands,
> Away, my sweet, to Liverpool Street, we're off to Gorleston Sands.

or this, entitled "The Tragedy of Little Johnny Gee."

> I'd like to be a pirate, said little Johnny Gee,
> I'd like to carry pistols and sail upon the sea.
> But when he got to Frinton and was bilious on a boat,
> He said, I'll be a pirate but on land and not afloat.

On 21 February 1921, a report was published with the ominous news that the railway industry was running at a weekly loss of £1,000,000 and the whole national economy was losing that sum daily. The economic consequences of the 1st World War were hurting badly; Post Office charges had risen, the miners' strike had reduced coal supplies, farm wages suffered as the government abandoned the policy of a legal minimum wage. Fare increases had not worked, and public alarm was wakened by news that milk tested at railway stations and analysed in London was "bad" and further tests at milkshops proved "definitely worse." Tuberculosis contracted by drinking such milk was a scourge among all ages.

The impact of this difficult year had its own effect on the Framlingham Branch. No Whitsun Bank Holiday trains were run, Sunday postal deliveries were cancelled, gas supplies were confined to 3 hours from noon and 3 in the evening and, far from being a disaster, "every available motor coach will be mobilised for the Whitsuntide holidays."

The arrival of the motor coach had been loudly trumpeted in March as Mr Potter announced a regular service to Ipswich. For the past seven years Potter's and Garrard's had competed for local car sales from Ford's, Potter's even managing an advertisement that quoted 450,000 vehicles sold so far, but not mentioning that this was the figure of nationwide sales! It was the year when the Rover company advertised its 8 HP car capable of 49 mpg, and *The Framlingham Weekly News* promised a regular motoring feature. The Mothers Union and the Methodist Sunday School Treats were the first turncoats against the Framlingham Flyer when, in July, they all travelled by coach to the seaside!

The timetable of trains on the branch line each day hardly changed in all its 93 years of passenger traffic despite the times when its use

by the public was pathetically small as motor-cycles, cars, buses, and coaches, milked the train traffic. So desperate was the need of passenger traffic that day return excursions to London in 1937 were advertised from Framlingham at 5/6, (27p), and a year later at 5/9 (29p). These were totally uneconomic fares but there was a short lived return to fuller use during WW2, especially with the building and operations of the USAF base at Parham. In 1952 the passenger services were withdrawn except for occasional specials and end of term College use; the latter did continue in principle into the 1980s when at least one Old Framlinghamian found himself boarding a train with some carriage windows labelled, "Reserved for Framlingham College" as far as Campsea Ashe.

Chapter 3

COMMERCIAL LIFE

The College

The College trains ceased in March 1954 and the reader may choose which of two explanations was the more likely one. One story is that on the last occasion, the College boys marched to the station only to find that the engine had not reached a sufficient steam pressure to haul the train. This infuriated the bursar, and everyone else, as connections were missed up and down the country and the school holidays had a disastrous start. The contract was not renewed.

The other story is that the Station master at Ipswich had become more and more disenchanted by the condition of the carriages when they were returned to Ipswich yard. It was frequently found that leather straps for opening windows were missing, having been turned into belts for trousers, and many other signs of careless use made him decide that it was no longer worth the trouble to get together a rake of carriages from other parts of Eastern Region, store them in the little space available at Ipswich, and then let energetic schoolboys do their worst. He wrote to the College bursar and informed him that the contract would not be renewed.

Either explanation sounds plausible and Doctor Ian Allen, Framlingham GP and keenest photographer and raconteur of the branch, delighted in telling these and many other stories.

The College specials were only a few of the many that ran out of Framlingham station, after the opening, starting on Whit-Monday in 1860 with a great flourish. The pick of the outings was a return to London, leaving at 6.40 am and returning any day of the week except by express trains. Return fares were 8/-, or 9/ld, or 13/- or 17/- according to class of travel. Each Monday of the holiday period there were day return trips to Aldeburgh at 1/3d, or 1/9d, or 2/6. For twice the cost similar trips were on offer to Yarmouth and Lowestoft. These prices still demanded some care in saving up for them but, at least, the opportunity was there and great numbers of people took it up.

In September1862 a special took passengers to London for nine hours there in which to see the Great Exhibition, leaving Framlingham at 5.00 am for a three and a half hour journey and returning from London at 7.30 pm. Over 1,000 people joined the train as it picked up more passengers from stations as far as Westerfield. All passed "without a single accident", and the emergency brakes were the topic of the journey. 1865 saw 600 on the London special and another offer was seized in September 1870 when 150 people boarded the train at Framlingham for an overnight excursion to London.

It was little wonder that the public made such lively use of its railway line, even to the extent that *The Framlingham Weekly News* became quite maudlin about it and after Christmas in 1867 the editor wrote,

"The GER company have been reaping their Christmas fruits; for the trains have been very heavily laden with goods and passengers; and

Fig. 5 The engine that did not perform for the last College special, Easter 1954. Old Framlinghamians Society.

friends from the East, West, North and South have mustered beneath the thatch of the old homestead, and embraced each other under the mistletoe, and told of past experiences in front of the Christmas fire."

In contrast to the College's last special, the station platform had been the site of huge rejoicing with the final confirmation of plans, to go ahead with the building of the College, on March 21st. 1863. A subscription list had been regularly published in *The Framlingham Weekly News* in previous months, giving the names of local and other Suffolk people who had committed donations for a memorial to Prince Albert which should be the County's own gift. One tradition is that the College was built with funds left over from London's Albert Hall, but this is untrue.

Suffolk clearly remains a leading and necessary contributor to the nation's agricultural industry but in those days Prince Albert had wanted to introduce into England something of the German tradition of education to equip young prospective farmers with up to date knowledge of the latest farming technology and husbandry. What better memorial could there be in Suffolk than the building of such an educational centre in a rural area?

In later years the College became more and more like other schools in the private sector but this was not without some distinctive features of its own, including being top school in the league of those taking Cambridge University Board examinations for the then equivalent of today's GCSE exams and in the top five for several years thereafter. In July 1876, to celebrate such achievements, a dozen carriages were hired for a special to Lowestoft and paid for by the Chairman of Governors, Sir Edward Kerrison. It was described as the Annual Outing and, fortunately for subsequent Chairmen, has ceased to happen for various reasons!

On that momentous day in March 1863, there was a meeting of the College subscribers at the Meeting Room made available at Ipswich station. Such stations did provide this facility so that meetings could be conducted in private at a place mutually accessible to all those most immediately involved.

The final hurdle to be jumped before the building could start was to obtain the co-operation of the people of Debenham in granting the land that belonged to the Hitcham trustees, via Pembroke College, Cambridge. The issue at stake simply was to agree that this plan was in accordance with the spirit of Sir Robert

Hitcham's will. The Venerable Lord Arthur Hervey, Archdeacon of Suffolk, moved a resolution to this effect and it was finally carried with only two against it.

The result was telegraphed to Framlingham station and when the subscribers' train arrived home there was ringing of handbells on the platform, a torchlight procession to the town, the Framlingham band played and the whole procession was led by a banner that carried the words, "See the conquering heroes come."

The rector of the day reckoned this explosion of enthusiasm did not merit a peal of the church bells but on the next day he was persuaded to change his mind and there was another procession with a thousand torches and Chinese lanterns, again the Town band, with the Woodbridge Drum and Fife band, and more banners bearing such slogans as "Truth shames the Devil", and "Where there's a will there's a way." The Procession halted on the Market Hill where three cheers were given for the College. The editor of *The Framlingham Weekly News* wrote, "We should think the old town of Framlingham was never so stirred to its centre as on this occasion."

In 1984 there was one further link with the College and the old East Suffolk Railway when British Rail ran a special train for pupils and their families from Ipswich to Carlisle, including the Settle Viaduct which then was under threat of closure. Hot weather compelled the Cumbrian fire brigade to forbid the *Flying Scotsman*, 4472, from hauling the train but the famous engine, bearing the Framlinghamian signboard, stood silent and still in another of Carnforth's famous station yard.

Framlingham's Life-line

The Agricultural revolution went hand in hand with the Industrial and in 1864 a lecture was given in the Crown hotel by Mr Ransome, from Ipswich, on the subject of "Steam Cultivation"

This was in January and another lecture followed in April and by the end of that month Mr T.T. Buckmaster was advertising as a flour and corn merchant, miller, seed merchant, coal supplier, haulier of manure, salt, building materials from Victoria STEAM and wind mills and- in capital letters- the RAILWAY STATION, FRAMLINGHAM. By June in the following year and not to be outdone by the Victoria Road mill complex, Mr Wm. Bone advertised himself as a manufacturer of dressing and threshing machines near the Railway Station.

The town's Annual Vestry Meeting was also alert to the new possibilities and to help in their "relief of the poor and other necessary purposes", the GER was ordered to pay an increase of 30% in their rates on the local half mile of track, gatehouse, sheds and station. The Station Hotel was also chargeable, and a little more than a year after the opening of the branch the *Railway Inn* also opened.

An immediate benefit to the town, due to the branch line, was a reduction in the price of coal which now came in by train and which also allowed the 1850 Gas Company, in College Road, to reduce its charges. Gas lighting was soon laid to the Station and to St. Michael's, while gas mains also ran to the new College buildings and to the castle. When new mains were laid in Church Street, in the 1980s, excavations revealed that the original pipework had long since rusted away but due to the heavy clay the narrow tunnel left by the decayed pipes still served as an adequate 'mains'. Of course British Gas contractors did still replace the Church Street 'pipework'!

The Gas Works remained in the ownership of Cummins, with the works at Saxmundham and

Halesworth, until 1948 and in 1953 was changed over to Butane Gas until it finally closed in 1973. Three stokers were employed in the coal days and a 20 ton load from the station lasted 4 days. The coal had to be of a particular quality and came from Wombwell colliery in SW Yorkshire, near Barnsley. This gas coal was very tarry and the tar was useful to builders' contractors and civil engineers. Members of the public could collect the coke but now all that can be seen is a disused space, in College Road, with a stone tablet on the back wall carrying the date of 1850.

The next great injection of fame and opportunity for Framlingham, via the railway, was the Suffolk Show in June 1868. This took place on the Castle Meadow and 52,000 feet of canvas was brought by train; the town did its part in supplying refreshments and prize money for the exhibitors and in decorating the streets from station to castle to welcome between 12,000 and 13,000 visitors.

62 years later the Suffolk Show returned to Framlingham and this occasion was in the second of the three most successful consecutive years for the town in the 20th century. In 1929 major army manoeuvres had been based in and around the town, in 1930 was the Show, and in 1931 followed the Pageant. The branch line, part of the LNER since 1923, came into its own for the Show, providing special trains from most parts of East Anglia at single fares and at half hourly intervals on each day of the Show. The station platform was extended a further 150 feet and most of the branch track was re-laid with new metals to bear the weight of heavy freight, machinery and animals, prior to the show, not to mention the many passengers for it. The town's people were asked to raise £500 and produced £1,000 and were warmly praised for providing "one of the best ever".

Corn on the Line

Within a few years of opening, it had been reported that the station yard was overflowing with corn, and it will be remembered how corn merchants were competing in publicity in 1860.

It soon became the custom for the railway staff to have a dinner, in January each year, attended by up to 30 employees and paid for out of funds donated by local tradespeople. This annual tradition lasted until the outbreak of the 1st World War. In 1897, after the Royal Toast, and 'the folding of the cloth' these statistics, for 1896, were announced: 18,349 passenger tickets sold, 8,308 tons of coal and 25,809 tons of other freight handled. A year later these figures had risen to 20,449 passengers tickets, 20,263 parcels, 1,370 boxes of Framlingham produce and 28, 637 tons of freight. These figures cannot be exactly compared because coal traffic and parcels are not separately included in both years and no other year's figures were reported. Some home arithmetic proves that approximately a hundred passengers coming or going each day was more than Framlingham's average but it was not a bad figure, given that this did not include Parham and Marlesford users.

As for freight, 34,000 tons at an average of ten tons per truck means that about ten trucks a day in a six day week were on the line, with more loaded ones going out than coming in. For a small branch line that was a good start, and when the line was finally closed it was still profit making on its freight, but deteriorating rapidly. Apart from coal, corn of one sort or another was the main freight in all its operating years, with EG Clarke and Sons being the largest customer.

This company had its own siding and at the peak of freight traffic over 20,000 tons a year were dispatched in bulk wagons, after blending in order to provide the correct malt content,

Fig. 6 E.G. Clarke's dryer. S. Vyce

having been brought in from the farms in 16 stone sacks. In metric weights men were carrying on their backs approximately 50 kilos a sack. As a contemporary view expressed it, "They were strong in those days, but it didn't do them any good." Similar sized sacks carrying wheat weighed 18 stone, of oats 12 stone, of beans 18 stone, and of seed clover a truly awesome weight of 20 stone a sack.

Here was the biggest East Anglian centre for the distribution of wheat and barley and they handled the biggest tonnage of barley in the country. At the closure of the line wagons, each carrying ten tons of blended barley, were going off to Bass, Ratcliffe and Gretton at Burton, to Ind Coope at Burton, or to Joshua Tetley at Leeds. These trains were called fleets, and in good years also included fleets sent to the Distillers Company in Glasgow, to Ireland's Guinness brewery via Bristol and to a maximum figure, in 1930, of 92 brewers and maltsters.

The traffic was at its peak, from December to June, at a rate of 1,000 tons, or 100 wagons, a month. Clarkes also sent wheat to Cranfields flour mills or milled it for their own supply of animal feed, and were suppliers of wheat, barley and mixed grass seeds. They railed barley from Eccles Road, Corpusty and Aylsham, all in Norfolk, and fertiliser and coal were also part of their business.

After the closure of the air base at Parham one of the hangars served as a storage barn and at one stage there were over 120 employees working for EG Clarke, a figure which shows how significant this company was as the largest local employer. The arrival of the combine harvester changed the whole pattern of grain handling and while Bibby's continued to rail barley from Melton, carting it by lorry from Framlingham, the end of railing it came in 1966.

Trade began, in 1880, at Heynings Mill, under the imperious authority of Colonel EG Clarke who used to drive a pony and trap to Diss and

catch a train to do business at Norwich Market and return the same day; the journey to Bury market each week was all by pony and trap. With the development of motoring he was then able to drive his Lagonda to Burton or to Bury St. Edmunds; the Ford V8 Pilot was used for Norwich on Saturdays, and the Colonel used his Rover for visits to Ipswich on Tuesdays.

Other coal merchants at the station had included WE Maulden, W Hatcher, and Fred Larter who specialised in steam coal for farm traction engines. HA Walne Ltd. were the other main agricultural merchants, and millers of barley used for feed rather than malting, who used the branch in their 50 years of operation in the station yard from 1939, including the supply of coal. Bibby's continue to use their premises in the station yard today and while all is now carried by their fleet of heavy lorries the total volume of business in the old station yard is a small fraction of its past.

Pigs and poultry, cattle and sugar beet also featured as part of the regular scene in Framlingham Station Yard where the animal pens remained in use for most of the line's existence. On 29 January 1898 the bacon factory, behind today's Fram Tractors, was opened and while some pigs doubtless came by train and were then marched to the factory, there is a photograph of 1910 showing a herd of pigs, most likely on their way to the same destination, being herded down to the main road in Hacheston.

W Hatcher collected and sorted pigs from local producers into three categories, i.e. 'Sainsburies' were taken by road to Haverhill and 'Londoners', the smallest pork pigs, and 'Walls', the fattest, went off by train to the capital.

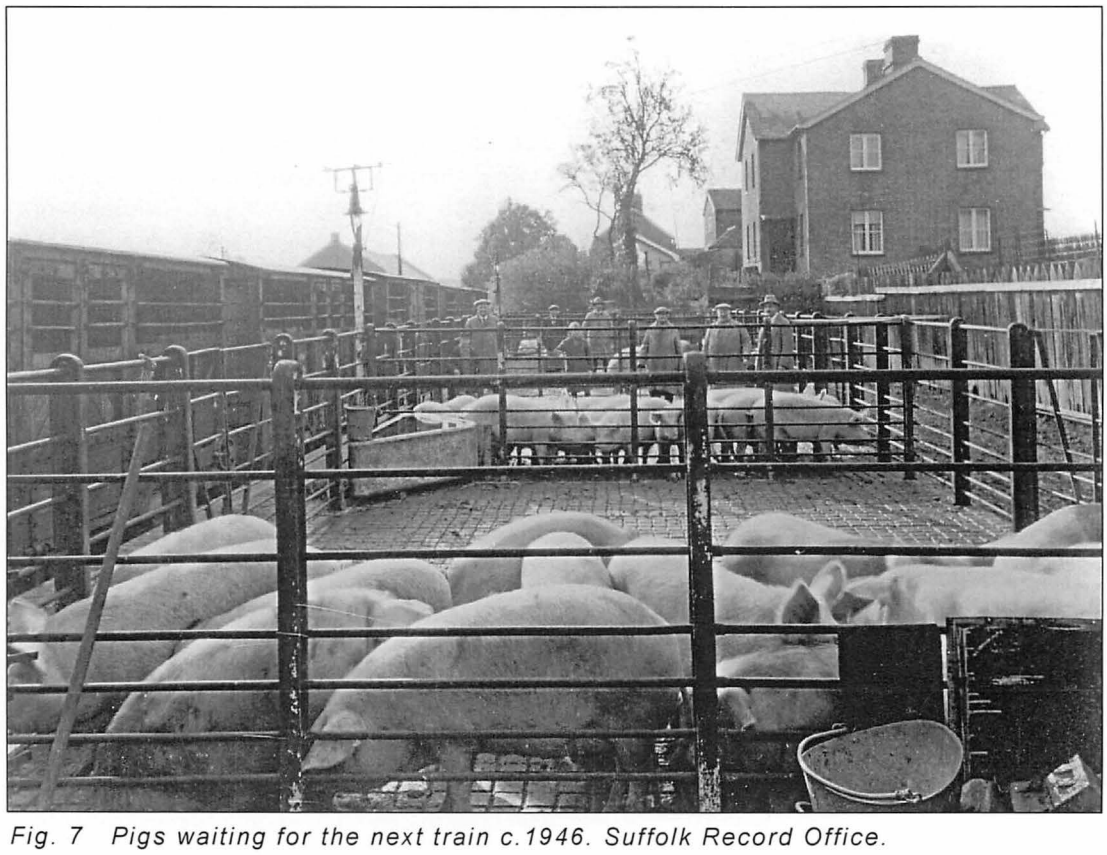


Fig. 7 Pigs waiting for the next train c.1946. Suffolk Record Office.

Hatcher's local haulage company worked closely with the station goods and livestock, carrying much of the coal, including two trucks a week to the College and to the Gas-works. The steam powered pump for circulating hot water at the College is preserved in Bressingham Gardens Steam Museum.

The bacon factory was closed in 1922 but in due course the smell of slurry was succeeded by that of the sewage treatment plant, which had to be extended shortly before the outbreak of WW2. This was a surprisingly useful guide to train drivers and well illustrated in one of Doctor Allen's stories about the night when the driver of the last train had to be replaced because of illness, and the only driver available did not know the line. He asked for advice about when to apply the train's brakes on this dark winter's night emergency and was told something to the effect that "When yew git along near the Fram straight you pass the sewage. Do yew put them brakes on hard and you should be orl roight." Apparently this advice was followed to the letter and worked to perfection as the train pulled up 6 inches short of the terminus buffers. The old bacon factory was closed in 1922 when it was bought by Eastern Counties' Farmers for use as a mill, and from them, in 1961, by EG Clarke who used it for grain storage, painting it blue in order to discourage sparrows!

There is a report in *The Framlingham Weekly News* of 31 October 1908, with the headline, "Exciting scene near Framlingham Station," which captures the occasional atmosphere round a country station to perfection; "A traction engine and a spirity horse were the leading characters in an exciting scene outside the Railway Station on Thursday afternoon. It seems the engine drawing two empty trucks, bound for Coddenham, was leaving the station yard and just at this time Mr Robert Berry drew up with several crates of chickens to be put on the train for market. The horse, on sighting the traction engine, began to plunge about and overturned the cart, the occupants (Mr Berry and Mr George Abbott) being, of course, thrown out and the crates containing the cavilling and frightened chickens scattered all about the road. This was not the whole of what happened, for as soon as the cart was upturned, the horse, still panting with fright, made a dash for the Station road but failed to notice a cart driven by Mr DH Reeve, and both vehicles were overturned. In Mr Reeve's cart was a new root pulper which was considerably damaged. Mr Berry's horse proceeded with the overturned vehicle down the Station road but was stopped near the Co-Operative Stores (presumably the Egg Co-operative) by a man named Thrower, of Kettleburgh, and handed over to its owner little the worse for the escapade. Both men were much bruised and shaken but beyond the damage already mentioned, little damage was done."

Drovers herded cattle many miles to market until the railway network made the journey shorter. Framlingham 's own market came into existence after the railway was opened and some cattle were driven on foot to the site where the Elms flats and car park are today.

Handling cattle at a railway station was often an eventful experience. At one Suffolk railway station, in the 1960s, the porter proudly put on his new but too large dungarees over his uniform when directed to help load some cattle trucks. One reluctant heifer had to be "comforted" aboard by a shove in the rear end. The porter's bib, being too large, loose and baggy, hung off his chest as he leaned forward to push. The heifer, being startled by this unwelcome interference, lifted her tail and emptied her bowels into the porter's bosom accompanied by uncontrollable tears of laughter.

Until 1999 people sometimes wondered why there was such a thick and tall hedge in College Road which cut off the light to the most handsome house there and made it look dark and gloomy. The fact was that in this house there lived the vet who became increasingly desperate as he tried to protect his house and garden from the clouds of dust that regular herds of cattle

stirred up on the unmade road *en route* to market or to the station. It was in 1910 that the steam-roller arrived in Framlingham to do something about road surfaces but not as modern roads are made.

Sugar beet was first processed in East Anglia at Cantley and in 1925 another factory was built at Claydon. The latter closed in 2000 and Cantley closed some years earlier. At the time of Claydon's opening sugar beet rapidly became a popular crop as a sure cash winner and Framlingham station had its own share of the business of transporting beet to the factories until the road hauliers took over, not least because the sampling of beet at the factories was not so much protected by the vigilance of the NFU.representatives if it came in by rail.

On the method of sampling the beet depended the farmers' cheques and so it had to be done with great efficiency but by primitive means. A lorry tail-gate, or wagon side, was unbolted and the initial fall of liberated roots tumbled into the wash that took them away. A factory worker at the tare house sampling bay made a gap at lorry floor level, and plunged a bushel container into the gap and pulled into the bushel, with a nasty looking 'crummock' or bent fork, a sample of the load.

Neither all farmers nor all sugar factory employees are angels of light and the NFU observers had to watch that the samplers did not hook into their bushels an undue amount of heavy mud, or too much beet which had not been properly topped in the harvesting. Their problem was not made easy because there were some farmers, well known to a few, who did their best to load the muddiest and most stony beet at that end of the lorry nearest to the cab!

All the samples were, and still are, individually tested, being weighed before and after thorough cleaning. Then a small cross section of the roots was taken out in a machine that used a circular saw that reduced the thin slices to a consistency rather like horse-radish sauce. The whole process was completed with the reading of a spectrometer which indicated the refraction of light in a filtered sugar solution produced from each sample of beet. This figure was used as the basis for calculating the value of the original load of beet for which the appropriate cheque was then sent to the grower. Many lorries a week returned from the factories loaded with beet pulp for cattle food either wet, or dried with added molasses and sacked.

A farmer would be happy with anything over 20% sugar content but distinctly suspicious, if not very angry, about any result less than 17%. Beet that went by rail was liable either to be left to linger and deteriorate until the week-end or to be sampled with less attention. The earliest report of beet at Framlingham was on 7 November 1914 when 500 tons was sent to Cantley factory by Mr Wilson from Cretingham.

It may not be surprising that many people still believe that beet sugar is something less than and different from cane sugar, but the fact is that they are identical chemical products.

A small secure bonded warehouse survived several years after the line's closure but it had previously been used for the storage of spirits, tobacco products, tea, sugar in two and a half cwt. sacks, and Guinness in Pipe or Hog's head barrels. 365 bottles of Nicholson's gin would come in at a time and one customer at Carley and Webbs is remembered as having six a week at 12/6 (38p) a bottle. On an annual rate that didn't leave any bottles for the rest of Framlingham so one wonders how many bottles and barrels in all came in and out of the warehouse in a full 12 months, not to mention whisky, port etc.

The Chicken Run

The riddle of which came first, the chicken or the egg, deserves to be rewritten as the Framlingham branch line or the egg. Certainly the line hatched a unique golden egg.

The first mention of anything significant in this part of the story of the branch line is a report in *The Framlingham Weekly News* on 23 June 1900, of how the 4.42 pm train included a luggage van for the export of 300 live cock pheasants from Jeptha Capon's pheasantries at Dennington. They went off in baskets, six to a basket, en route to Germany. Mr Capon's pheasantries were described as now among the first in the country and they had become a regular feature, as also was the carriage of eggs to market for more and more producers. Over the next ten years this had become so common and popular a practice that in March 1910, the Framlingham and District Agricultural Co-operative Society AGM was mostly devoted to the matter of increased charges made by the GER for carriage of poultry produce to London, and Lord Stradbroke, from his Henham estate, attended.

The 1911 AGM was not reported but in the 1912 meeting reference was made to the election of Canon Abbay as chairman of the Co-operative. He was rector of Earl Soham for about 50 years and included in his pastoral work there the gift of a tree to every householder and many of these trees still have proud owners who continue to pick their apple crop. He was a close friend of Framlingham's rector, Canon Pilkington, who was honorary auditor of the Society.

In the 1913 AGM the Egg Co-operative had become the largest in England with 648 members and £29,088 of business, having supplied 4,660,000 eggs for carrier by rail from Framlingham station. After Christmas, in the following year, mention was made of the 3,500 turkeys which had been dispatched to London, a greater volume of business than there had ever been before.

Partly due to the need to provide more produce to help in the quality of diet for wounded men returning to England in 1st World War, and partly due to an increasing home demand the trade multiplied. A special demonstration train was prepared by the Great Eastern Railway and it toured Norfolk and Suffolk to promote "means to procure these two most useful rural products," i.e. eggs and poultry. The demonstration train arrived at Framlingham on 28 October 1916 and towards the end of November the train reached Liverpool Street Station with celebrations on its great success.

The Co-operative reported, in the same month, a net profit for the producers of £2,630-18-6d compared to the previous year's £1,454. Four hundred and seventy-nine tons of eggs had been dispatched in 8,582,674 boxes containing 45,770,332 eggs! A further 1,853 turkeys had also gone to London, all delivered from Framlingham station by the GER.

Meanwhile there were increasing reports throughout the country of dismay about the future of agriculture due to so many men being away at war and the many acres no longer producing corn and potatoes. However, in February 1917 the GER asked the Framlingham Egg Co-operative to take over the administration of the whole of their operation in East Anglia for the carrying of poultry produce. It was expected that this would involve the supervision of carrying 150,000,000 eggs annually. The other part of this Great Eastern initiative involved the transfer to Eastern Counties Farmers of all responsibility for running the Framlingham Co-operative's goods depot, including the movement of grain.

Two months later the AGM heard that Station Masters were being enrolled to promote the availability of good breeding strains of poultry

for members of the public to keep some chickens. An appeal to all owners of chickens was made at the same time, asking for eggs produced in Easter Week to be given for the wounded.

In all the desperation and sincerity of such action the vision of Station Masters offering chickens and tickets for sale, and the picture of how and where they kept them and what the passengers did with them, add comedy to this scene. Then *The Framlingham Weekly News* ran a weekly article from June 9th., beginning with the Leghorn breed, and the series ran to the end of the year.

Whether or not those arrangements were the beginning of Eastern Counties Farmers, the Framlingham Egg Co-operative certainly made a good war effort and started something profitable in a period where farming generally had reached a critical point of collapse. By 1921 the AGM had the same chairman, Canon Abbay, but the company had changed its name to the Framlingham and Eastern Counties Egg and Poultry Society and met at the Crown and Anchor in Ipswich. The 200,000,000 figure had been reached and 1,100 tons of eggs had been carried, and membership of the Co-operative had risen to 4,000. New properties had been acquired at Debenham, Attleborough and Ipswich, and special tanks had been prepared for preserving eggs in the glut of production in the period from November to January.

It was in 1928 that the 14 year old Cecil Peck, born in Castle Street, was given his first job at "an egg depot in Station Road. One of my older brothers had the job of testing eggs as they were brought in from the local farms. He used an old cocoa tin with a hole cut in each side and a candle inside. My job at twelve and sixpence a week was to sit all day with a pail of water, a tin of Vim and some rags and wash the eggs. I'm not sure how many eggs I washed nor how many my brother tested....and at the age of 15 I left Fram for London and a new world." This was written in 1987, with warm affection and memories of family, friends and visits but the stark reality of boyhood employment is an interesting ingredient in the success reported at AGMs of the Co-operative.

However, in July 1927 Canon Abbay, chairman, and rector of Earl Soham died; egg producers were urged to maintain supply but the omens were not encouraging. Two years later it was reported that the movement of eggs was being successfully transferred to road carriers, though this was increasingly due to the growth in numbers of small producers. Over the next few years business began to drop and in September 1935 it was reported that cheap imports were making business very difficult.

The Branch Railway had served the Co-operative well but its freight business was, inevitably, more concerned with other farm products by the early 1930s. Eggs continued to be packed in the new Badingham Road Packing Station, built in 1947. The business was sold to the Coddenham company of Fraser Holdings, and Bibby's took over from them but sold to Thames Valley Eggs who then sold to Eastwoods at Thetford until the whole operation came to an end in February 1979, 15 years after the last freight train ran from Framlingham station.

Chapter 4

Railway People

The Way of Life on the Branch

A very real culture of pride and service developed among railway employees who enjoyed some of the surest job security available in the 19th and 20th centuries. The Framlingham Branch Line's existence was part of that era, from 1859 to 1964. It was also a period rich in the stories of everyday life and the five mile branch to and from Framlingham was as good a theatre as any as railway employees learned from hard experience the need for thorough safety regulations.

The day of opening was a dramatic enough first scene and there soon followed many more, particularly at various level crossing gates, though not with such fatal consequences. In November 1859 Mr. Whatling of Saxtead was on his way from Saxtead to Wickham Market and when he approached the Broadwater Gatehouse, over which still remains an LNER sign, his horse began to kick and plunge. He was thrown to the ground, was severely cut and bruised, and his gig damaged. This was in the evening dusk as the train approached ... the horse presumably being alarmed as this unexpected monster approached. The horse "immediately started off at great speed," in competition with the train to get over the crossing first. "But fortunately it was stopped by the railway gate-keeper closing the gate and placing the red signal of danger before its face. Mr. Whatling was conveyed home and medical aid called in." There are so many details not preserved in this story and it kindles the imagination.

The horse was not to be superseded without a fight and in April 1864 "four horses charged loose after the snorting engine had come to collect carriages." Mr. George Eade managed to stop them before they escaped out of the yard. Confrontation between locomotive and horse was common enough to become a means of dangerous entertainment, as when a horse was deliberately let loose on the line at the Kettleburgh Road crossing "for a lark." "The engine slowed but brushed its tail" It was at this same crossing that the gates were smashed one Sabbath when the keeper was in chapel and his boy, whom he had left in charge, fell asleep. The animal kingdom suffered its first martyrdom in 1884 when a train ran into, and over, a bullock at Parham and the incident was reported as being "a narrow escape for a train." A Parham pig soon followed the bullock.

The flat landscape of much of East Anglia meant that when railway lines were built in these parts a great many level crossings were required in preference to bridges. Before the advent of automatic systems each crossing required permanent staff to open and close the gates, the railway preference being to close the gates to road traffic and leave them open to trains. In the 1950s and 1960s both the high cost of such staffing and of conversion to automatic barriers was a large ingredient in the decision to close many rural passenger services.

However, on rural branches, such as the Framlingham one, trains were so infrequent that the gates were left closed against the railway and the crossing keeper would hastily open the gates at the sound of the train whistle, or of a bell rung from the previous crossing or signal-box.

There were six such crossings on the branch, two in Framlingham, one at Parham station and another at Marlesford station, and two others as well as some farm track crossings. The cottages built by the railway to house their staff at the four intermediate crossings are clearly in use as private homes today.

The crossing keeper's job was considered a simple manual task and, as housing was provided, the wages were inevitably low. Before any career in industry was regarded as a norm for women as well as men, security at crossing gates was often women's work. It was expected that women would remain at home and it was judged that the work of a crossing gate keeper did not much interfere with domestic responsibilities. Often the husband worked as a ganger or at an adjacent station. Resident keepers, living in a little cottage by the line, were still employed by Railtrack in a few places in East Anglia to the end of the 20th century. The East Suffolk line was saved from complete closure by radio signalling and the end of 70 staff posts.

There were a few perks, not least the frequent dropping of best quality steam coal from engine tenders as they passed by, though not with 100% accuracy as many a cottage window was shattered. In the past it was not uncommon for a family to rear a pig, raised on scraps and the family's potato peelings, as a necessary part of the family budget.

Picture the scene then as a goods train was forced to stop at the signal protecting the crossing because the lady gatekeeper was late in opening the gates. The engine crew noticed that she was in tears and asked, "What's the matter luv?" "It's our pig. Oi reckon tha's on the way out". "Doon't you worry, missus. Yew can have one of our's." The train was drawn up alongside the cottage garden, a wagon door was flung open to reveal a number of healthy pigs on their way to market. A quick exchange of one pig for another took place and the train proceeded on its way.

Engine drivers were equally well served from time to time, including those who trundled along the Framlingham branch when only a daily freight train ran. Apples on the trees of gardens along Station road, and a stop at Marlesford for watercress for tea were probably the least significant perks!

Fig. 8 Cecil Salter and George Finch, linesmen, return home by self propelled trolley. Family photo.

Fig. 9 Cecil Salter and George Finch joined by Bill Fordham "cleaning the length" near Parham station. Family photo.

Not really as a response to such practice, freight trains to Framlingham and Snape were, in the 1950s, classified as bonus turns. The crews would receive a small bonus on their wages if they returned to Ipswich promptly and enabled the planners to allocate the engine and crew to additional useful work. Sadly such incentives were unable to turn rail freight into a competitive alternative to the growing fleet of road vehicles, well promoted by the Road Haulage Association, and final rail closures became inevitable.

To return to the early days, the Broadwater gatekeeper was twice late in opening the gates, with the inevitable crash and smashing of splintered wood in all directions. On the first occasion he owned to oversleeping and on the other to oversleeping at "a religious meeting", but was defended on the grounds that he was "of good report." He was Mr. King who, one evening, was "sitting on the railway arch near the target ground, waiting for his wife to walk back from shopping. He fell asleep over the side of the bridge (presumably the two arched viaduct that remains standing over a stream in the middle of a field) and into the river 25 feet below. He was so stunned he fell unconscious and was found next morning by his wife. He was taken home on a railway trolley and progressed favourably. A narrow escape this."

Sot's Hole was the next gate-house and was the scene of one smash after another.

The identity of Sot's Hole is uncertain. There is a Sot's Hole cottage in Kettleburgh but no railway line goes near it. The name Sot's Hole is given to a small disused sand pit just off the road from Manor Farm to cottages, on the Parham to Framlingham road, known as Butterfly Cottages. Mr. Pooley was the keeper at Sot's Hole and was in regular trouble either because he could not hear the train coming round the curve of the Sot's Hole cutting in the fog or because he forgot the timetable; there was also the occasion when he was "hoeing his crops." The regular smashing of gates was a hazard requiring more vigilance and care than had yet been learned, as well as being very expensive to put right. The last mention of him tells how he was yet again late and "only put in his appearance just in time to see how easily the engine could perform his daily work of clearing the way." In mitigation on his behalf it has to be said that this crossing keeper's house was not connected to the bell system which linked the keepers to each other and warned them of the next train's coming. Each normal gatehouse had its own bell code.

A last anecdote of the steep learning curve for gate-keepers is the account of what happened

Fig. 10 Frank Ling from Marlesford, Bill Fordham from Butterfly Cottages, Tom Nash from Campsea Ashe and Cecil Salter, from Broadwater gatehouse, hay-making for Framlingham Station. Family photo.

when the keeper at Marlesford Street, presumably where the line crosses the little back road from Hacheston to Marlesford, was absent from home and had left his wife in charge. She developed toothache "and in the arms of Morpheus took an ariel flight in dreamland ... and the shrill whistle of the engine failed to bring her mind back to sublunary matters, and the driver was compelled to smash the gates." Here, again, it has to be owned that this gatehouse was the second on the branch which was not connected to the warning bell system.

The gatehouses were also the homes of the gangers or linesmen whose job it was to maintain the condition of the rails and points in their wooden sleepers, walking the length of the line each day, and sharing with their families in the haymaking, along the line, to feed the horses used at Framlingham station yard for shunting wagons or those of carters and passengers using the trains. The men were called in for whatever maintenance jobs arose at station buildings and propelled themselves up and down the line on the trolley. The stables remain to this day at the Station Hotel.

Many a Framlinghamian remembers well the names of Cecil Salter and his wife and family at Broadwater, of George Finch, Bill Fordham, Louis Ruffles who was landlord at the Station Hotel, Albert Smith, John Nash, Jack Bennett, George Marjoram, 'Painter' Snowling who also was the last guard and porter at Parham, Ted Manthorpe and Jack Dale who were locomotive driver and fireman. These are the names of a few of the men who ran the Branch Line in its final chapter until it closed and while most have reached their journey's end including, most recently, driver Ernie Finbow a few still survive to reminisce.

From the opening of the branch until the 1st World War the Railway staff enjoyed generous local support and affection. In June 1861 *The Framlingham Weekly News* reported that "our respected station master", being ill while in London, was in the Middlesex hospital thanks to Mr. Newson Garrett "who obtained the privilege of the medical faculty in connection with the above institution. We hope he will shortly return in good health."

It was not always commendation because a few years later "when the Monday train failed" a large number had to wait until 12.05 except the Rev W. Berlee and Mr T.T. Buckmaster, who had a season ticket; a special was laid on at 10.30 at the cost of £800 for which Mr. Buckmaster, the clearly prosperous miller, still determined to sue the Great Eastern Railway.

The August Bank holiday outing, later in the same year, had a poor start. The previous

evening the locomotive for the outing was hauling the last regular train for the day to Framlingham but broke down at Parham. It was reported that some walked home, some hired a lift, and a hundred stayed on board until repairs had been made, and the train reached Framlingham at midnight. The next report was that only seven stayed on board! However, on the next morning the holidaymakers boarded the train at 6.50 am and as the train started the tie of the two large driving wheels broke. Bitter protests poured out, an official investigation was demanded and the terminus was blamed, the timetable was overloaded, the supply of locomotives was inadequate and mismanagement was the cause of all that was rotten.

The following week some statistics were published to try to mollify the public. "The GER has to uphold a stock of 52 engines and 1,360 carriages and wagons for every 100 miles of railway worked. The company had 764 miles of track. In contrast to this the Great Western had 69 engines and 1757 items of rolling stock per 100 miles and 2,084 miles of track." Quite what the advantage was in favour of the GER is not easy to discern but the sorry truth was that Framlingham's experience fairly reflected the trouble that East Anglian railway companies were suffering. So far as the local employees were concerned all was forgiven and they enjoyed another sumptuous feast in the following January.

By the end of 1880 efficiency and popularity was generally restored and it was reported that "not only is there the best service of trains possible to provide for the travelling public, but the company have revised their second class fares and have made a reduction." From this position of strength the Amalgamated Society of Railway servants issued a manifesto:

a. To limit the duration of ordinary duty to 9 hours a day or 54 hours per week, and in the case of signalmen and shunters to 8 hours a day or 48 hours per week.

b. To obtain an adequate increasing rate of pay for overtime, or duty performed in excess of the ordinary day's duration of 9 hours.

c. To secure for every grade payment for Sunday duty as for extra duty. To reduce the amount of Sunday toil.

d. To close goods yards at 1.30 pm on Saturdays.

In the following year the GER announced that Refreshment Rooms were to be provided on platforms for the use of passengers who were urged to purchase there "rather than elsewhere."

Presumably more staff were employed, passenger services continued to prosper, and day return trips to London were advertised for 7/6d.

Cadbury's jumped on the wagon of prosperity. "Signalmen, engine drivers, porters and others, who frequently have long intervals of work between meals, should drink Cadbury's cocoa, a sustaining beverage, agreeable and comfortable, during long spells of work." The networking to take advantage of commercial opportunities, create a market, and then gain the franchise for supplying it is transparently clear.

The last reported Branch Line dinner was in 1915, and after First World War there seems to be no evidence of this tradition being continued.

The Branch Line At War

The Boer war hardly featured significantly in the story of the branch line, though *The Framlingham Weekly News* carried a report, in May 1901, of a great procession and festivities to welcome back to Framlingham station all those who had volunteered. On this occasion

there were no casualties and all returned safely but the pulpit in the College chapel is a memorial to old pupils who died in that war.

It was a very different story in the 1914-18 war. On 2 August 1914 Britain declared war on Germany after the latter had declared war on France and invaded Belgium. Within two days 93 volunteers went off from Framlingham station, and by the end of September a further 91 had enlisted. These were not all necessarily from only Framlingham but more than half the homes of the town sent at least one member of the family and there were two families whose four sons volunteered.

The Book of Remembrance which records the names of those on the churchyard memorial is no more complete than the memorial itself, and this is partly because some of their families had moved and names were recorded elsewhere. The sad truth is that some others were lost. It was once calculated that in those days there were approximately 160 men aged between 18 and 38 living in Framlingham. Of these a few were in special reserve employment or medically unfit and therefore about 130 were in the armed services during 1914-18 war. Of these, at least the 68 whose names are recorded did not return.

On a lighter note it has to be acknowledged that there is no report of the welcome at the station of the returning heroes. The legend, for which no evidence seems to exist, is that part of the welcome was to load the train with crates of beer for the last leg of the journey. By the time the train reached the terminus, the passengers had reached their own happy oblivion and none of them appeared at the carriage windows and all were in no fit state of mind or limb to march in tune and step from the station to the Market Hill. It makes a good legend, but behind it is the sinister truth that nothing was ever to be the same again, that all the death and destruction of the First World War did not deal effectively with European disunity, and within 20 years it started all over again.

One hero's tale deserves to be told as a tribute to them all. There was a one armed post-man known as Beau Kerridge and remembered by many people in Framlingham today. One memory of him is his daily stride up to the main entrance of Framlingham College carrying the mail in a large satchel over his good shoulder. He was, for many years a churchwarden at St. Michael's, and in his retirement from the Post Office once told the rector of his own war experience.

At some point in the trenches he was hit by shrapnel which shattered his arm and it seemed impossible for anyone to stem his loss of blood, and he was left unconscious. His story then was that he came to himself and saw "Frammygam on the end o moi nose and I thought oi'm a go'in to get hoom". So the navigator's formula, common to air and sea, of "on the nose" had a precedent! Apparently he managed to crawl to an army first-aid post and survived. His memory lingers in the shape of the Victorian pillar letter box which still stands opposite his Framlingham home and is like the one that features on the Town sign in the Market Square.

World War 2 brought at least two short raids from German bombers; on one occasion, in June 1942, members of Percy Stannard's family were killed when their home was hit in Albert Road, the site of the present Royal British Legion branch which was reopened in 1952.

The second occasion was in the morning of Harvest Thanksgiving Sunday when a plane flew in from the direction of Saxtead road and dropped a succession of six bombs. The first landed on what were then the allotments on which Norfolk Crescent has been built, the second fell next door to Lesley Heron's house in College Road, the third landed opposite on the schoolteacher's house and killed Miss Harvey, the next just whistled by the Hitcham almshouses and the fifth fell in the sale yard on the site of the Elms Car Park and flats. There was a sixth, so the tradition has always been, and

it did not explode as it dived into the river's mud!

Memories of the flying bombs or 'doodle bugs' aimed at the Parham air base, especially the one that overshot its target and came over the town and fell somewhere short of Dennington still remain as does memory of the plane that machine gunned Fore Street. College schoolboys clearly remember the sight of a Flying Fortress crashing after take off from Parham and falling near Cole's Green with a massive explosion. Wreckage from it continues to be ploughed up and an engine from it is in the base control tower, now a museum.

It is an amazing thing that neither Framlingham nor Parham was thoroughly attacked, especially as the bomb depot was in Framlingham station yard with each consignment of supplies to the base waiting for the supply lorries to collect them. The branch line also escaped, though there was another aircraft that crashed shortly after take-off and only just cleared the station at Parham before the huge explosion that followed as the plane hurtled through the Methodist chapel and hit the bank alongside the road just coming out of the village towards Framlingham.

Three armoured trains patrolled the East Anglian railways and consisted of little tank engines built before the 1st World War for London suburban services, and converted coal trucks carrying 1917 Hotchkiss guns originally made for WW1 tanks. One was based at Bury St. Edmunds, one at Ipswich and one at Saxmundham which was to cover an area including the Framlingham Flyer. This was known as train three and its last recorded trip was on 26 March 1943, to Framlingham, and it was then withdrawn from service.

There seem to be no recorded accounts of men and women returning from the armed services by train to Framlingham but this was because there was no *Framlingham Weekly News* left to publish such news. It had ceased to be printed as war broke out but local news reported in the *East Anglian Daily Times* regional newspapers published the two adjacent headlines, "Germany at the Crossroads" and "Framlingham is Ready."

The Plum Line

Parham

This village epitomises rural Suffolk and, as very recently overheard on Saturday Market Day in Framlingham, "We have very good sunsets at Parham." In those WW2 days the station master and his wife, Ray and Jean Taylor, had an unusual plum tree locally known as the 'Parham Plum'. One or two Parham Plums still exist in local gardens, including other Gatekeeper Cottage gardens; this plum is more usually recorded, in the official list of fruit trees, as the Warwickshire Drooper! The tradition persists that it was brought by an entrepreneur among the 'navvies' who built the line and who came from Warwickshire.

Fig. 11 The hatchment in St.Michael's, Framlingham, commemorating the flying crews from Parham who never returned. Adrian Morgan.

Plum trees are recognisable by their stones, as well as their appearance, size and taste, and there are at least 100 different stone markings or 'finger prints'. Parham plums are not quite as large as Victoria plums but have a fuller flavour. The fruit are described as pendulous, and have yellow skins which blush pink if the sun gets to them as they hang under the foliage. The fruits of this tree and much other fruit and vegetable produce, and an exchange and mart in bicycles for USAF personnel, formed a useful sideline in the lives of the Taylors at Parham station.

It was in the evening of Wednesday, 12 May 1943 that the first trucks marked with a white star appeared at the still unfinished base. It was officially known as the 390th Bombardment Group, Station 153. VE day was 8 May 1945 and the final review of the 390th was three weeks later. Flying duties continued for another month as part of the emergency supply of food for those starving in the newly occupied countries of the European mainland. The last aircraft left the base on 26 June. leaving some personnel to clear the base and pack up equipment until they too left, by train, on Sunday, 5 August.

A very full and well illustrated account of life at the base and of every one of its wartime missions was produced, under the title *The story of the 390th*, in those few months between the end of hostilities and the closure of the base. By the time the book was published the personnel for whom it was intended had dispersed. Profits from the sale were intended to cover the cost of a memorial window in Framlingham church but these plans could clearly not come to fruition. However there now hangs above the inner porch door of St. Michael's a traditional hatchment which commemorates the lives of those American personnel who died in aerial combat.

The navigational direction included on the hatchment, 'On the Nose,' in courtly French, conjures up an image and emotion that pays some honour to the fearful experiences of those bomber crews as they stuck to their final bearing in the approach to the target area. The Latin, inscription, *In Caelo Quies*, might remind

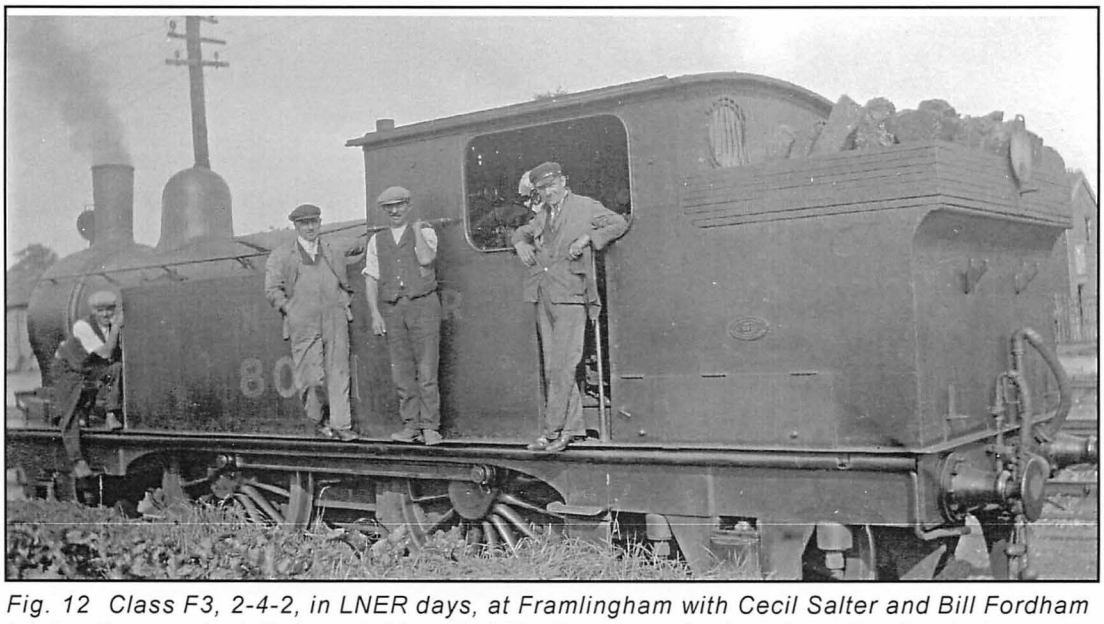


Fig. 12 Class F3, 2-4-2, in LNER days, at Framlingham with Cecil Salter and Bill Fordham joining fireman Jack Dale and driver Ted Manthorpe on the footplate. Family photo.

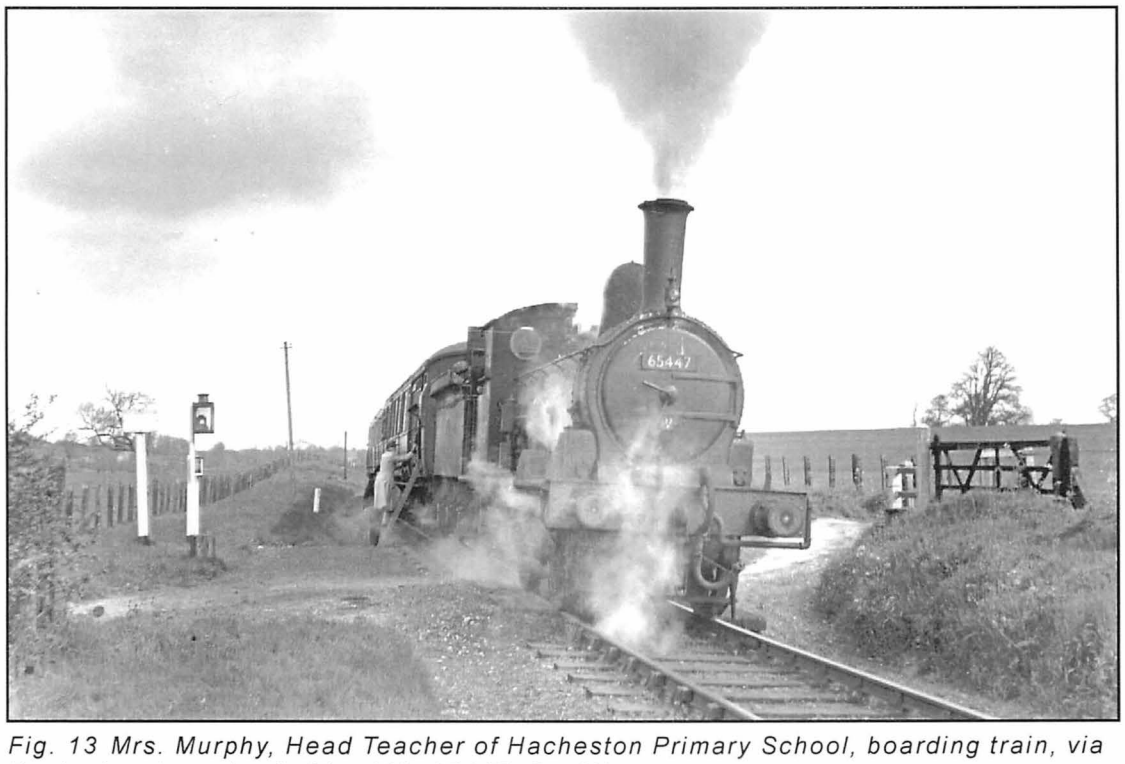


Fig. 13 Mrs. Murphy, Head Teacher of Hacheston Primary School, boarding train, via the brake steps, hauled by J15, 65447. Dr. Allen.

today's residents around Framlingham and Woodbridge of that more recent occasion when the USAF base at Bentwaters finally closed. The next day, for the first time in some 70 years since the opening of Martlesham RAF base, the sound of military aircraft engines ceased to beat up and down the Parham sunsets and the Suffolk skies, leaving an eerie silence and quietness that hardly anyone noticed. The sound of road traffic had become louder in 1993.

A Parham eyewitness described the last day of the 390th; "they went off shouting and singing and waving. We could hear them as they went along the road to the station until they got further and further away. Then everywhere became silent. The Yanks had come ... and now they were gone ... we walked back home across the runway. There was no-one in sight, it was just as if everyone had fallen asleep."

How long did a trip to Framlingham take? An American flyer would reckon to get there on one of station master Taylor's bicycles sooner than the Flyer would make it by steam to the terminus. However, he had to get to Broadwater Level Crossing gates before the train and that was the real race for being on time for a film and a date in the back row of the Regal Cinema, where the seats were in pairs. Another well documented measure of the journey time was how long it took a young Parham mum to suckle her baby. With the help of a slow train she reckoned to complete her feeding on board as the final jerk of the brakes brought the train to a halt a few inches short of the terminus buffers.

Hacheston

It had a Halt, built in 1923. *The Great Eastern Journal* reports it was of a standard design

Fig. 14 Mrs. Murphy hires a saloon for her school outing to Framlingham in the last month of passenger services, hauled by F6, 2-4-2. Dr. Allen.

consisting of "a cinder track at rail level with a nameboard and an oil lamp, usually situated near to a level crossing or an overbridge where passengers took shelter during inclement weather underneath the arch of the road overbridge." Hacheston had a farm track crossing but no overbridge!

All carriages used at these halts were meant to be equipped "with a set of steps of special design which could be moved inwards to clear the station platforms when not required." These steps were locked into the Westinghouse brake system of the train, controlled by the engine, so that the train brakes could not be released nor the train started until the steps were turned and folded away.

The folklore of this halt includes the story of the headmistress of the village school who, as usual, opened her carriage door with a view to climbing down the short set of steps to ground level. On this occasion there was a new guard who had mistakenly placed the steps on the other side of the carriage with the result that the she fell flat on her face and broke an arm.

There are several problems about this story, not least that this was told by Doctor Allen with a twinkle in his eye. However there are many people who travelled the way to Framlingham who think they vividly remember the guard doing precisely this thing, i.e. jumping out of the train to place the short stepladder, borrowed from the Framlingham station master, outside the appropriate carriage compartment and then lifting it back. It may have happened occasionally when there was some work to be done to the two carriages kept for this line; when this happened two spare carriages had to be borrowed and supplied with a portable set of steps so that such an accident happened to the schoolmistress on this particular occasion.

It was also true that the occasional holiday specials to London, on Sundays, had to be

equipped with main line quality carriages which would not have been specially adapted for Hacheston Halt. It might have happened! The one certain thing is that Dr. Allen had to treat the headmistress who fell out of the train at Hacheston Halt.

Another story is of the train guard, whose name was Stan Templar, with a reputation for being a ladies' man and who lingered at Hacheston Halt with one of the passengers. The train left without him. He also practised as a barber and did staff haircuts on the train, one side going up and the other side returning down.

How all these details fitted into a coherent story is the nature of folk lore. The making of this halt was a local attempt to compete more effectively with the growing road passenger traffic but by 1925, despite the introduction by the LNER of the Best Kept Station competition, the popularity of rail travel was rapidly diminishing in many parts of the country. Train fares were higher than those for comparable road journeys, holiday and day trip specials were not so popular, track maintenance was becoming more and more expensive, and wages bills were rising.

In the next two years a great advertising drive and a reduction of fares took place with some success. The railway companies also initiated their own integrated transport system by running coach services from town centres to the nearest station and introducing more and more lorries and vans for the delivery of freight. Remember those three wheeled motor cabs with their articulated wagons. The Framlingham branch came near to closure but there were those three eventful years in the late 1920s plus the increasingly valuable freight traffic that saw the branch survive. Saturday specials for Ipswich Town home matches also helped!

Marlesford

The station remains almost unchanged and clearly visible just off the East carriageway of the A12. The last station master was Mr. Messenger junior, whose father, Walter, had been in office before him, who bought the station when the line closed so that it was his life long home until he died in 1989.

The present owner has retained the inside of the building and it is a time capsule of the East Suffolk Railway, including the coach body which sits on the platform as extra office room provided in 1902. This 4-wheeled brake carriage started life in 1874 on the Chingford and Enfield suburban line, for 20 passengers, and cost £260 new. It was delivered at Marlesford in 1902, approved the next year by the Board of Trade Inspector, and cost a further £345.

It was the last station before the junction with the main line, at Campsea Ashe and gathered considerable commercial importance, being on the main East Suffolk road. A 1910 photograph shows the adjacent mill buildings of Gooderham and Hayward and there was soon established a coal yard, including a regular weekly wagon of fuel for use at Glemham Hall. The Shell Company, as Esso had at Framlingham, had a small depot for household paraffin lamp oil but this closed in 1920. It was in the 1960s, in the Suez crisis, that the shortage of any oil was the cause of one of Marlesford's more lasting memories.

The Duke of Edinburgh, showing a suitable royal witness to the need for fuel economy, did a progress through Suffolk by train. He first went to Hadleigh and from there to Lowestoft for a further function but, in Doctor Allen's version of the story, arranged to have an overnight stop near Marlesford Hall with a view to some early morning shooting which apparently disturbed a considerable number of loyal subjects in their slumbers. Whatever the success he had, he used the royal train which was stabled at Marlesford with a B1 4-6-0 engine attached to provide steam heating overnight. When he was at his toiletries next morning, and standing before the mirror with razor in hand, the train made a sudden heave and began to move to Campsea

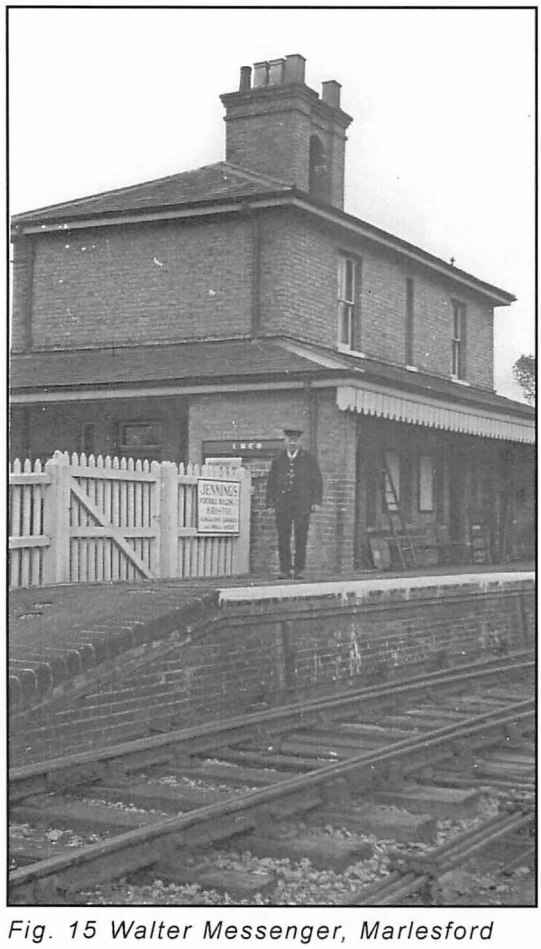


Fig. 15 Walter Messenger, Marlesford station master, 1922.

Ashe junction. His equerry was treated to such a tirade of anger, as blood flowed down the royal cheeks, as was never to be forgotten.

This was not all on that occasion because at the time that the train reached the junction there was also due an express train from Lowestoft on the up line. So we are to imagine the scene as all railway rules, and many finger nails, were broken while two trains travelled South, the express on the up line and the Royal on the down line. A rather round signalman or station master was also seen to be running up the down track in front of the Duke's B1 engine, waving a green flag, to lend some legitimacy to the occasion. On arrival at Campsea Ashe station it was then possible to resume travel in the correct direction, with the real royal engine at the front, on the down line to Lowestoft.

Before Mr Messenger junior worked for the LNER, in the late 1930s, he was employed as a clerk at the Woodbridge Canning Company under Mr Rust whose daughter well remembers her train journeys from Woodbridge to attend the then Mills Grammar School for girls at Framlingham, built on the site of the present Mills Meadow Centre for elderly people.

There were some 19 pupils who joined the train for school at Woodbridge or Melton, Campsea Ashe, Marlesford or Parham. It was on this first train of the day that the newspapers were carried for delivery at stations along the line, and if they sometimes arrived looking

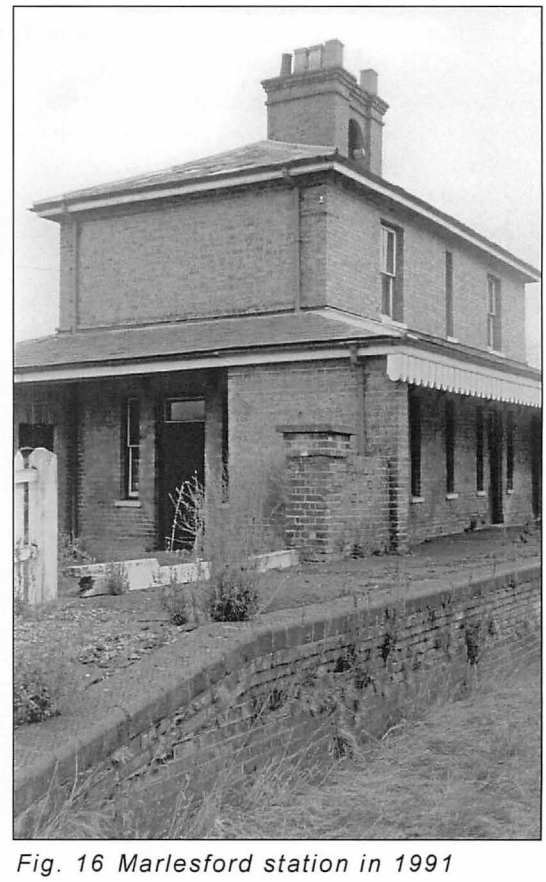


Fig. 16 Marlesford station in 1991

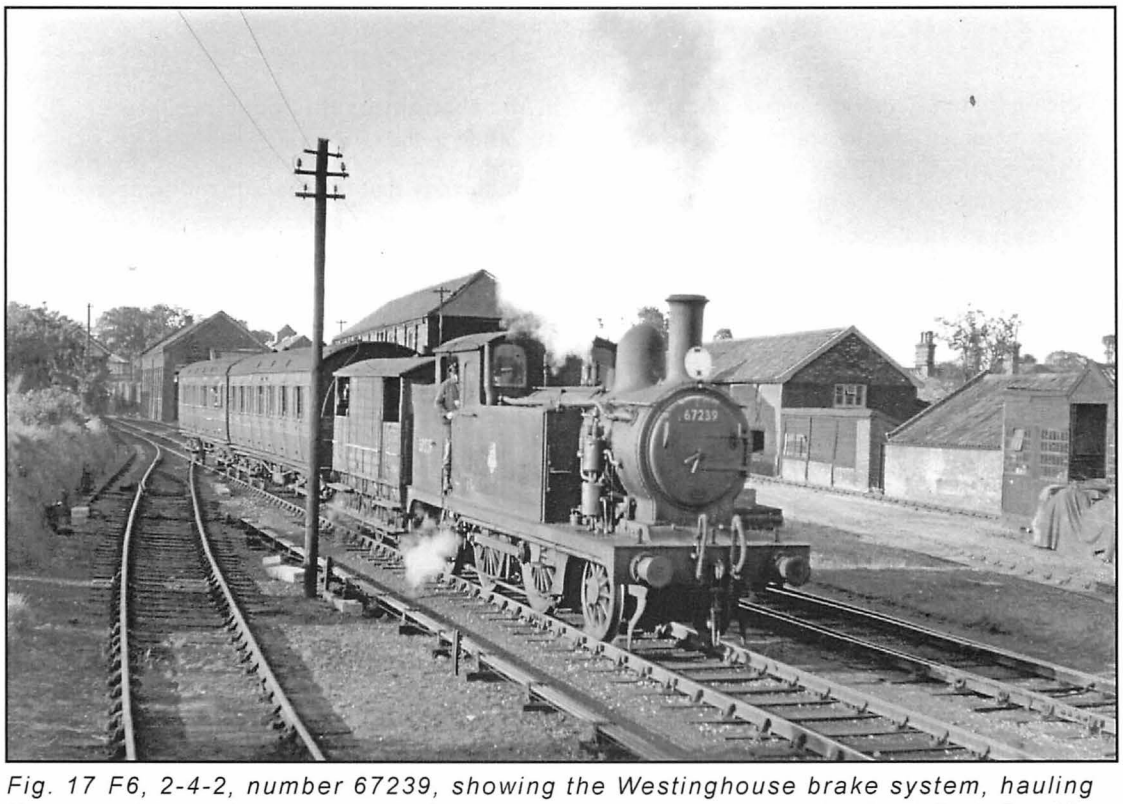


Fig. 17 F6, 2-4-2, number 67239, showing the Westinghouse brake system, hauling the normal branch passenger train out of Framlingham, unusually front first. Dr. Allen

scuffed at the edges the chances were that they had been used as a leap-frog course. In the summer term the ice cream man with his tricycle joined a later train and returned when the girls caught their train home. Whatever was left the girls then bought but their behaviour was not always much better than that of the College boys.

Mr Rust's daughter still amusedly remembers the treatment they gave to the carriage while playing mobile netball with hats and shoe bags which were known to fly through the windows, especially at Marlesford where Mr Messenger senior would ring his son to complain to the chief clerk at the Canning Factory about the behaviour of the latter's daughter.

Framlingham residents well remember the ice-cream man coming onto the platform from the guards van and selling his wares at 2 for sixpence around the town. The Mills Grammar girls redeemed themselves by buying the guard a packet of cigarettes after a particularly rough fight with bulrushes which left the mobile arena in such a mess that Miss Prickett, the Headmistress, was informed and there were no more complaints, for a while.

The Spiritual Way

Dr. Allen used to say that the parson, the doctor, the bank manager and the station master were the four most significant members in the community, and the last of these had certainly to be a member of the Church of England because it was from that congregation that most of his customers came, and that the guards and drivers could be Baptists or Methodists.

An examination of parish church registers tells a little more of the story of railway personnel on the branch line. The first reference to the presence of the branch line is a wedding between George Summers, a platelayer, and Hannah Cattermole, aged 19, of Framlingham on 10 May 1859, sure evidence of railway employees already *in situ* before the opening.

The first Baptism was of Frederick William, their son, in July 1860. Their career is easily followed because in January 1862 their daughter Georgina was baptised but by then they had moved down the line to Bramfield. It was easier for them to get to Framlingham than for most ... all they had to do was catch a train; father was still a platelayer. On 6 September 1863 they were back in St. Michael's for another Baptism, this time for their son William and father was still a platelayer. The platelayers usually lived in the level crossing keepers' bungalows so space was running short but nothing deterred and they were back again for the Baptism of their daughter Alice. The difference was that they now lived at Halesworth. This did not imply promotion for in 1868 they returned to Framlingham, from Snape, for the Baptism of their loyally named most recent son George Albert, and father was still a platelayer. No passenger trains ran from Snape, only freight from the Maltings, and the imagination runs riot at the thought of this considerable family travelling in the guardsvan!

On the day that the first infant Summers was baptised another familiar name in this story was involved as Charles, son of John and Harriet Pooley, was also baptised. Father was the gatekeeper already referred to at Sot's Hole and whose service was so costly for the railway company. In the following two months two station porters brought their infants to Baptism; the third occasion was a truly high day for father and mother Goose brought along their children Emma, Robert, Walter and Alice.

After this busy time of births and baptisms there was a fallow year before another porter and his wife brought James Warne to Baptism, as also did the Newson family bring a daughter Alice, and surely there was a lovely story behind the Baptism of Minnie, daughter of Jasper and Emma Newson. Jasper was a railway guard from Ipswich who had married Emma when he was a 20 year old sailor, in 1859, and Emma was a widow innkeeper. By 1868 another eight railway families had brought their children to Baptism. At Parham George Luck, platelayer, took George to be baptised and Hacheston produced five more railway children by 1888.

At Campsea Ashe the porter on duty was well known for his call to the passengers, "All change for Frammygam". Occasionally this vernacular version of the town's name is still heard and other evidence suggests that the guard was not necessarily wrong. The name engraved on the Tudor Communion cup at St. Michael's is "Frammynggam, 1568". Each station had its own copy of the King James version of the Bible and Marlesford's copy is kept in the local history museum in Framlingham Castle.

Chapter 5

The End of the Line

Last Journey

There came the time, even before Mr. Beeching, when hard statistics had to be looked at, e.g. the journey from Campsea Ashe to Framlingham on 25 October 1952 at 1.15 pm. and the return journey at 3.20 pm.

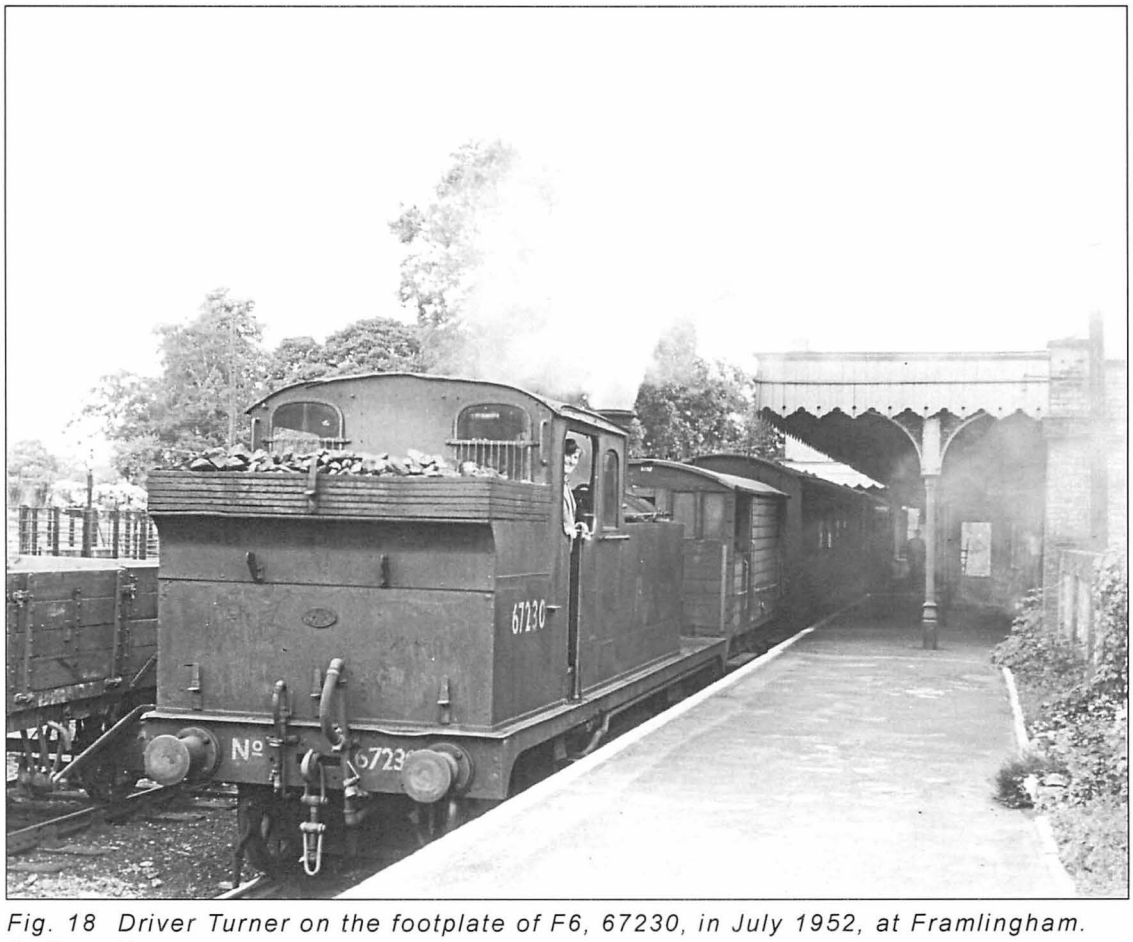


Fig. 18 Driver Turner on the footplate of F6, 67230, in July 1952, at Framlingham. A. Forsyth.

Fig. 19 Cab view of approach to Marlesford station. A. Forsyth.

The engine was number 67230 weighing 68 and a half tons, a typical branch line engine. The train left two and a half minutes late with 12 passengers for a four and three-quarter minute ride to Marlesford where no passengers boarded or alighted. From here the train ran to Parham, via Hacheston where there were no passengers and therefore no required stop, but the crew were responsible for opening and shutting the farm track level crossing. Three passengers boarded the train at Parham, leaving on time and arriving at Framlingham where all 15 alighted.

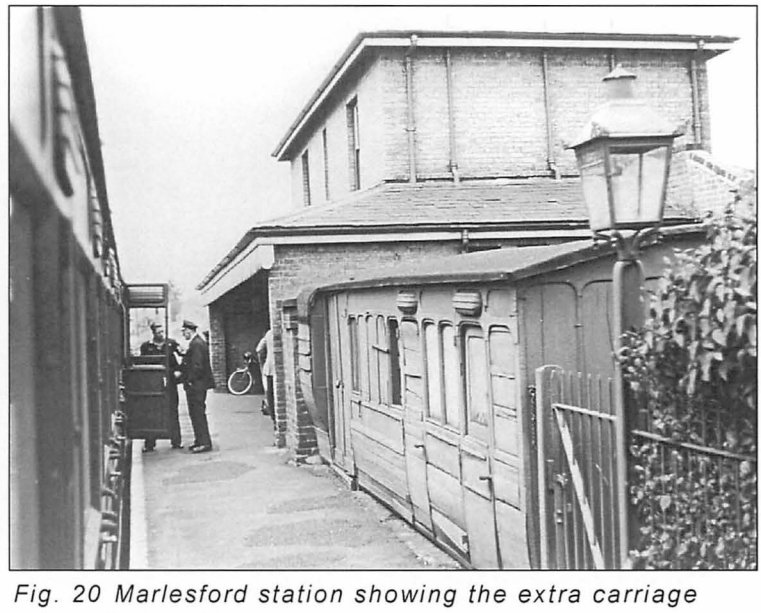


Fig. 20 Marlesford station showing the extra carriage office. A.Forsyth.

The End of the Line
Last Journey

Fig. 21 Arriving at branch side of up platform, Campsea Ashe. A.Forsyth.

This was in term time and years before there would have been Grammar School girls on their way home but on that day there were six passengers from Framlingham and two of them alighted at Parham followed by one more at Marlesford and the remaining three alighted at Campsea Ashe where they had to wait 45 minutes for the next train to Woodbridge. This was a typical scene of passenger traffic by rail, on a small rural branch line, serving a series of villages equally well served at cheaper and more regular times by a parallel road taking less time.

Fig. 22 F6, 67230, having come round, now heads the return train for Framlingham, from the surviving down platform. A.Forsyth.

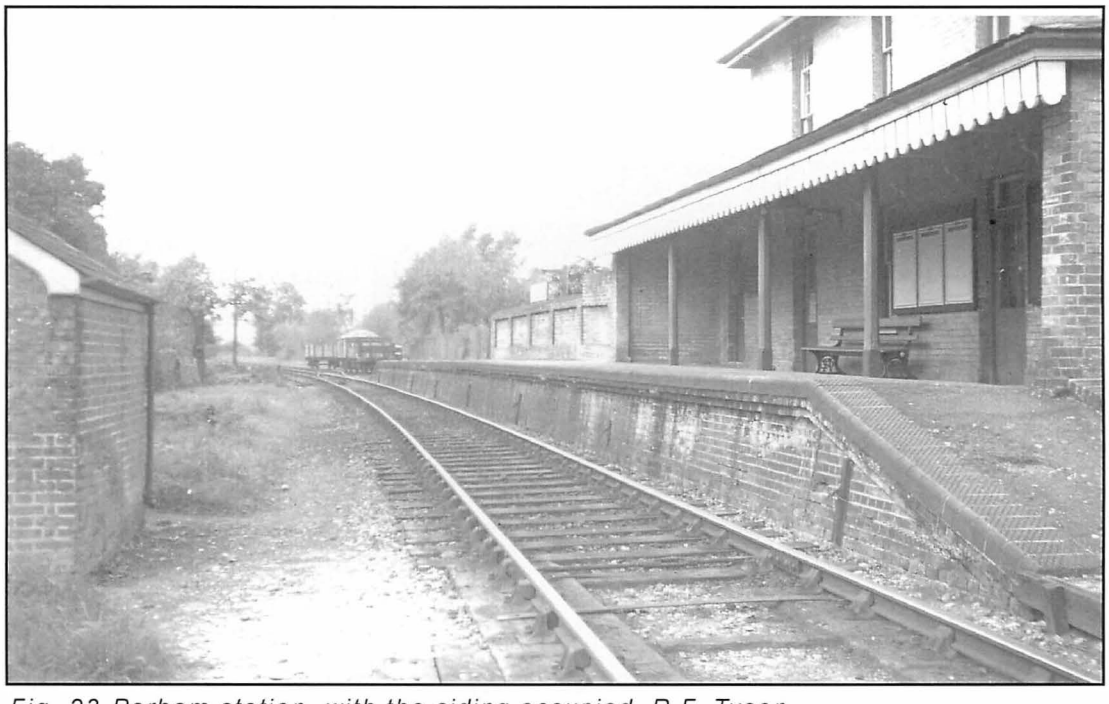


Fig. 23 Parham station, with the siding occupied. R.F. Tyson.

Fig. 24 B12, number 61564 hauling a larger than usual mixed train from Framlingham. Dr. Allen.

The End of the Line
Last Journey

The consequence of the collapse in passenger traffic was the closure of all passenger services with the last train, at 6.52 pm on Saturday 1 November 1952, All Saints Day. The journey was celebrated with the same enthusiasm as that which welcomed the opening of the line in June 1859, 93 years earlier. On the Monday after the closure the *Daily Telegraph* carried an article under the headline, 'The Flier Lets Off Steam For The Last Time.'

"Carrying passengers dressed in Victorian and Edwardian style, to whom hot punch was served, the 'Framlingham Flyer' ended on Saturday evening its 93 years of service over the seven miles of rail between Wickham Market and Framlingham, Suffolk. With a laurel wreath over its funnel and carrying more passengers than it usually does in a month, the 'Flier' was cheered by hundreds of people along the track. Villagers set off fireworks as the train passed by." When the train reached Framlingham passengers and the crowd joined in *Auld Lang Syne*, and one passenger was able to fulfil a lifetime's ambition and pull the communication cord and not incur a £5 fine. The report quotes a figure claiming that in the previous six months there was an average of only seven passengers daily.

More than 500 passengers travelled on this train which was equipped with five additional carriages and, according to the *Daily Telegraph*, all were guests of Lord and Lady Alastair Graham and their family who lived nearby. Sir Peter Greenwell was not to be outdone by the engine's whistle, and "clad in a smock and flowing white beard blew blasts on his hunting horn" at every steam powered whistle. Driver John Turner, well known on the line for 23 years, made a final tour of the track before leaving the coaches behind and running light to Ipswich overnight. Usually the last engine home was berthed and prepared for the next morning in Framlingham's own engine shed. The local *East Anglian Daily Times* published a fuller story accompanied by an amusing photograph but there is no mention of how John Turner managed to return home, and this was not the only occasion when his travels took on the air of drama.

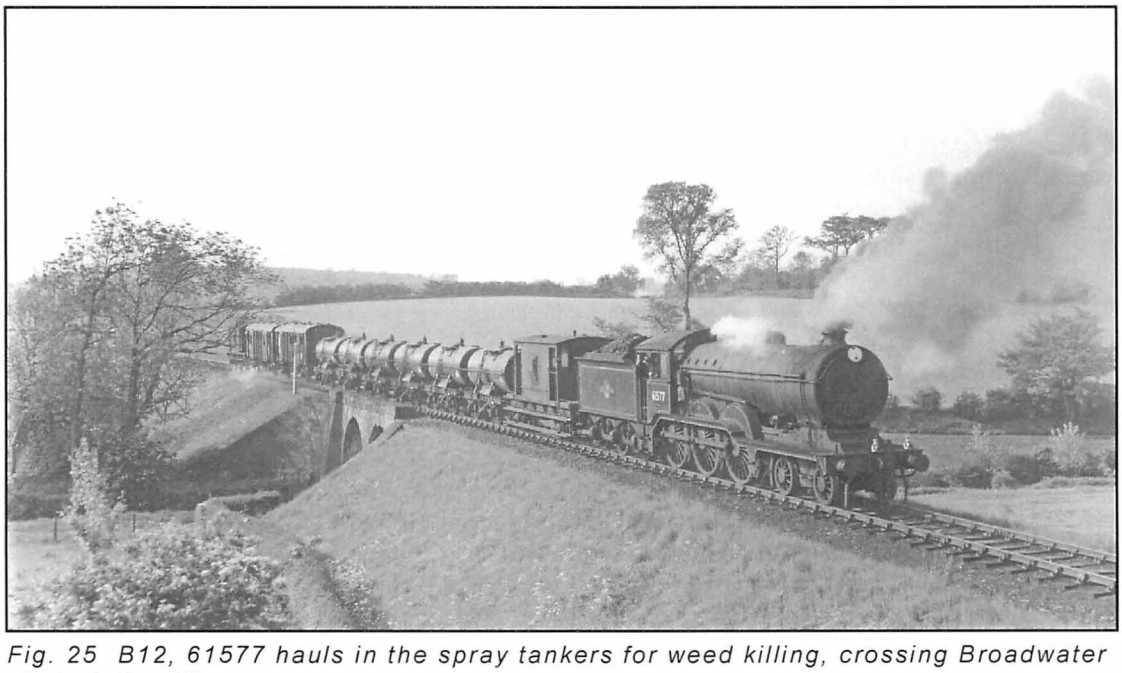


Fig. 25 B12, 61577 hauls in the spray tankers for weed killing, crossing Broadwater viaduct. Dr. Allen.

Fig. 26 A smart B12, number 61571, hauls the return first class special to London, full of guests after the Pryor family wedding. Dr. Allen.

The Final Judgement

The Framlingham branch was not built to main line standards and no large or glamorous engines appeared along its length. The largest steam locomotives that appeared were Class B12/3 4-6-0s from Ipswich shed. Built by the Great Eastern Railway for hauling express trains to London, by the 1940-50s they had been relegated to secondary routes and duties. Their appearance at Framlingham was limited to special excursion or maintenance trains. There is one survivor of the class, No. 61572, which can be seen at Sheringham on the North Norfolk Railway.

Similar in outline but smaller in size were the D16 4-4-0 type. Affectionately known as 'Clauds,' after Sir Claud Hamilton who was chairman of the Great Eastern Railway. The first of the type carried a splendid nameplate, *Claud Hamilton*, over its wheel plasher. Sadly no member of this class survived the cutter's torch, but this nameplate was rediscovered behind a cupboard at Liverpool Street when the station was redeveloped in the mid 1980s. The name plate is now in the collection at Bressingham.

The usual engines for freight work on the branch were small tender engines of Classes J15 and J17. These were 0-6-0 engines that, for over 50 years, were part of the everyday furniture of the East Anglian Railway scene. Happily one J15, complete with tender, also survives at Sheringham. One J17 is in the National Railway Museum at York.

The End of the Line
The Final Judgement

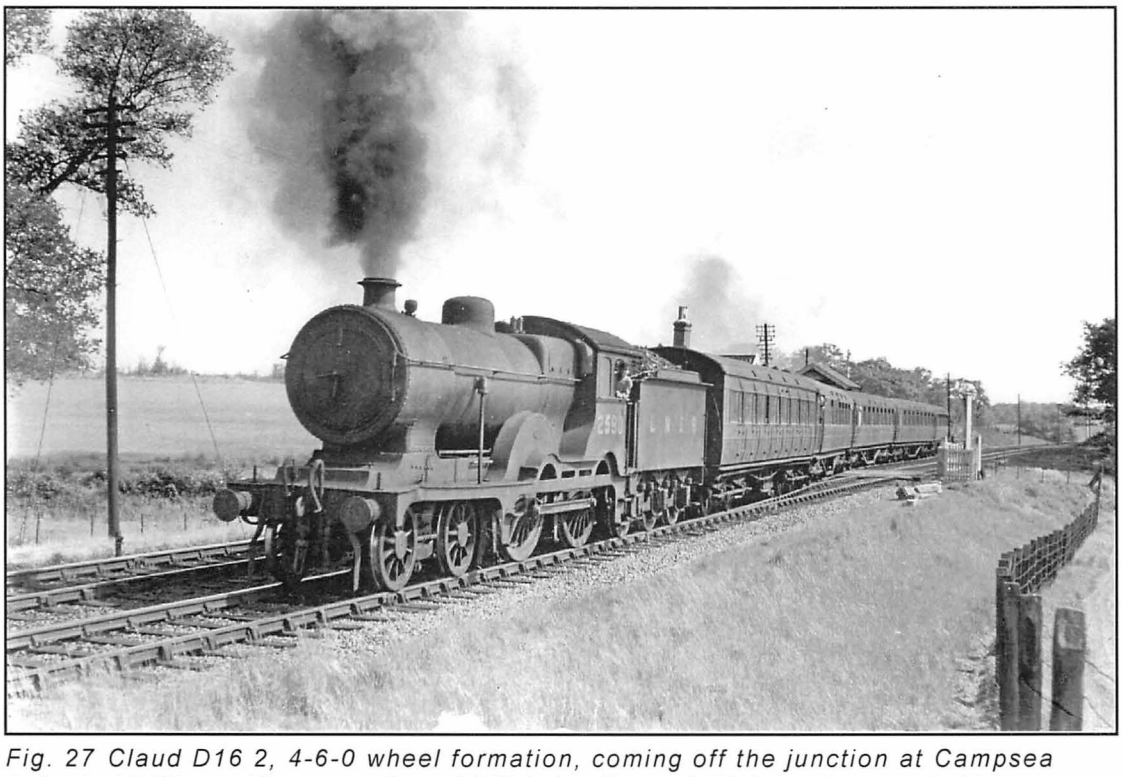


Fig. 27 Claud D16 2, 4-6-0 wheel formation, coming off the junction at Campsea Ashe in LNER markings, numbered 2590, hauling a British Legion special to Felixstowe. Dr. Allen.

Fig. 28 The same Claud with new 1947 British Rail markings, with a 6 added to the LNER number, hauling a typical mixed train. Dr. Allen.

Fig. 29 Same engine, getting dirtier, approaching the junction with coaches only. Dr. Allen.

Fig. 30 J15, number 65447, 0-6-0, starting from Framlingham with spray train. Notice the water tower, and the large goods shed which still survives. Dr. Allen.

The End of the Line
The Final Judgement

Fig. 31 J15, 65467, hauling end of College term special. Dr. Allen.

Fig. 32 J15, 65459, with College crest on the chimney, approaching junction. Dr. Allen.

The End of the Line
The Final Judgement

Fig. 33 The well remembered experience of the guard walking along the track to open gates at an un-manned crossing as J15 65389 chafes at the bit, or lets off steam as the iron horse did. Dr. Allen.

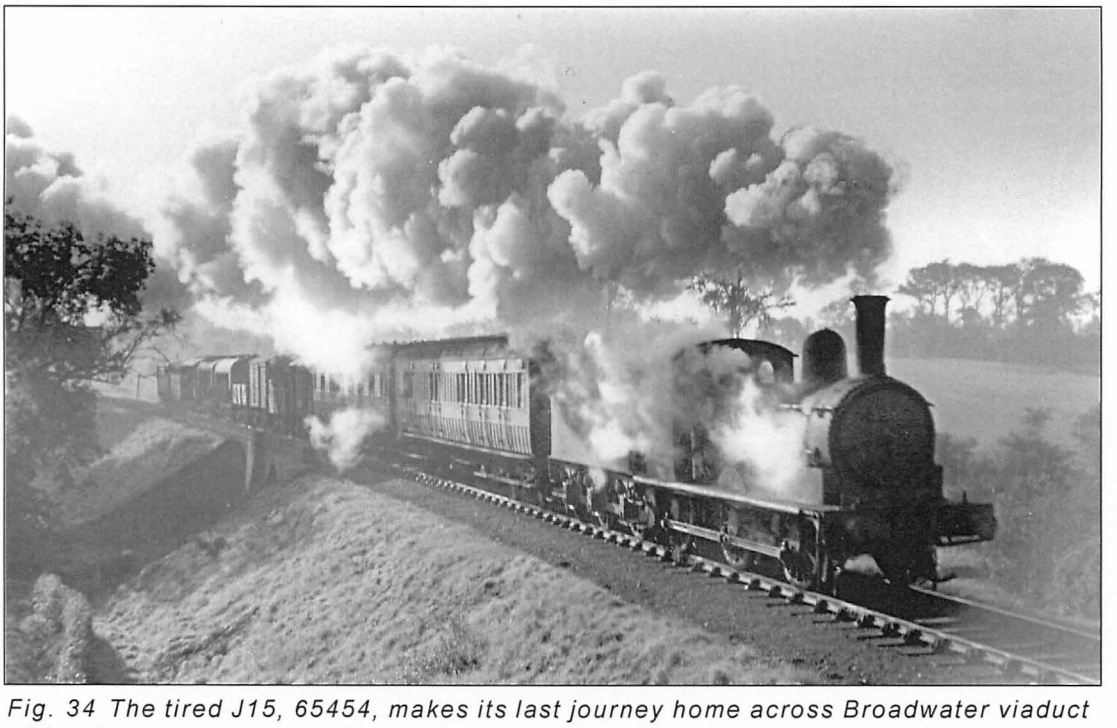


Fig. 34 The tired J15, 65454, makes its last journey home across Broadwater viaduct with a heavy mixed train, blown piston gland, and leaking steam in all directions. Dr. Allen.

Fig. 35 65454 was employed next day for a simulated crash to provide an exercise for local emergency services near the junction. It then travelled light to Stratford to be broken up. Dr. Allen.

Fig. 36 Immaculate J15, 65469, hauling the Eastern Region General Manager's special inspection train, approaching the junction. They had stopped for lunch at Parham. Dr. Allen.

The End of the Line
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Passenger services on the branch were also handled by small tank engines, with a 2-4-2 wheel arrangement, Classed as F3 or F6. These were, by the end, venerable machines that had performed their duties reliably and without fuss for over half a century. At the end of the second world war the nationalised British Railways inherited vast fleets of antiquated rolling stock that was worn out. The cost of replacing it was prohibitive and it was this that led to the Beeching report and the under funded 1955 modernisation plan.

preserved examples are now at Colne Valley Railway at Castle Hedingham.

Until the end, the freight service was hauled by some of the experimental and mostly unsuccessful small types of diesel on which British Rail sadly wasted much of its limited budget. The Class 24, known to train spotters of the time as "skinheads" because of their rounded cab roofs, were the least disastrous and two examples can be seen on the North Yorkshire Moors railway. Built in England, they used

Fig. 37 Class 30, D5587, hauling the Ramblers Special on the only diesel hauled passenger train to run on the branch. Dr. Allen.

There never was a regular diesel passenger service over the branch and only one diesel hauled a passenger special. This was a Brush Merlees type 30, with a 1750 hp engine which brought seven coaches for a Ramblers Association special to Framlingham. Their original engines were not a success and all had to be re-engined with English Electric power units. In this guise, as Class 31, they survived on the network to the end of the last century and two a Swiss Sulzer diesel engine.

The worst type of new diesel was, arguably, the Class 29. A few were based at Ipswich when new and came to Framlingham occasionally. After only a few years they were transferred to Scotland but all were withdrawn by 1970 having had a working life which was a mere fraction of that enjoyed by their steam predecessors.

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Fig. 38 Class 30 pauses in front of the points at the junction as the key is handed to the signalman. Dr. Allen.

Fig. 39 Class 30, D5520, hauls freight past the main shed at Framlingham. Dr. Allen.

Fig. 40 Class 15 Paxman shunting in Framlingham yard. Dr. Allen.

The ugliest type of diesel ever to be seen on the branch was the Paxman built 800hp Class 15. These were not at all successful and train crew were advised not to enter the engine compartment when the engine was running for fear of exploding oil pipes. They were quickly relegated to static carriage heating duties. Surprisingly one survived and is now at the Railway Heritage museum at Crewe, owned by the pop record entrepreneur Pete Waterman. Others might have been preserved but, as with much 1950s built diesel rolling stock, asbestos was used in their construction and they had to be scrapped.

A very similar looking engine is the English Electric Class 20 which still hauls flasks of nuclear waste on the East Suffolk line between Sizewell and Cumbria but they never came to Framlingham. The goods traffic continued to generate a financial return on the branch to Framlingham but it was inconvenient rather than uncommercial and no real money was spent on maintenance of track and buildings.

The big goods shed at Framlingham has a preservation order on it and the Station Hotel, with the adjacent station building, remain to kindle the imagination of what used to be and provide excellent home brew and food or, in the station, a wide selection of vintage motor cycles can be found for sale. The various commercial buildings of mills and warehouses in the Station yard are running down and there will be an empty industrial area or derelict brown field site in the not distant future.

Framlingham was saved from mediocrity by its railway and while various units of work and industry have been introduced along the Framlingham end of the old track, providing some employment and serving the local

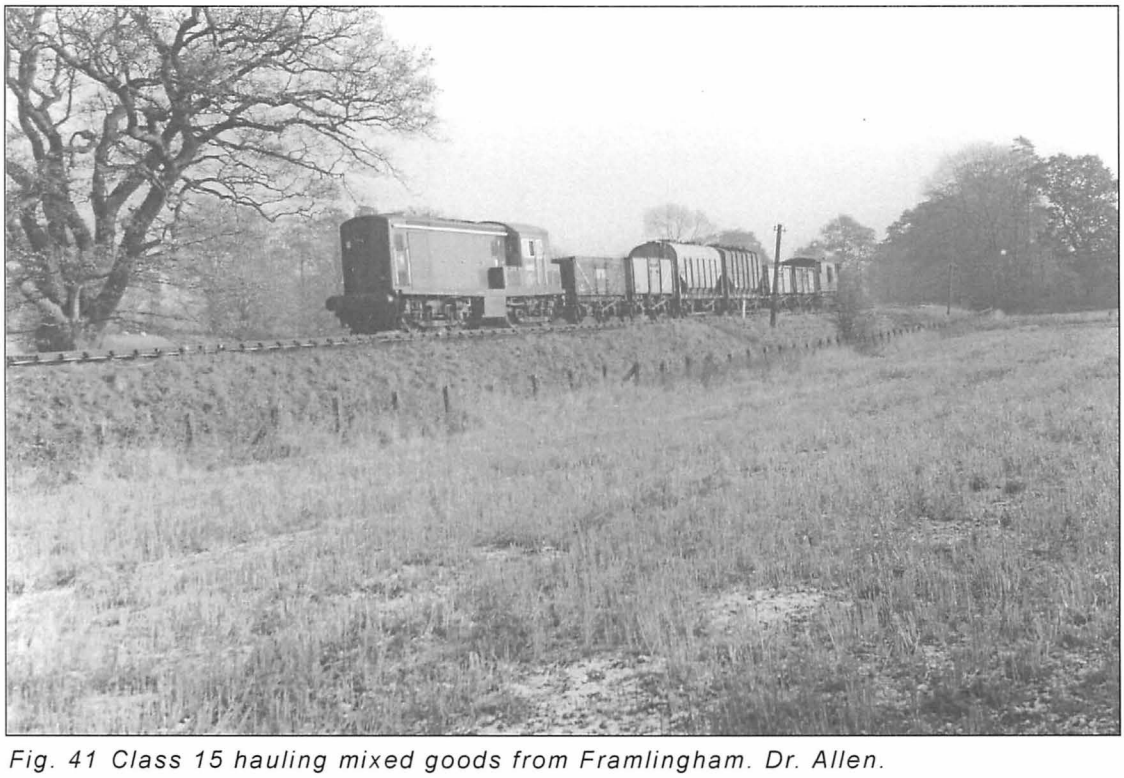

Fig. 41 Class 15 hauling mixed goods from Framlingham. Dr. Allen.

community well, there is a sort of gloom cast by the aging group of nearby motley warehouses.

The new technology centre on the opposite side of Station Road is a great flourish of confidence in the future, alongside new Potters and the offices of Heritage Housing. Hope for the future of the town's commercial life also hinges on what plans might appear for the use of the freight yard site.

Meanwhile, the platform sign, "FRAMLINGHAM" survives at Mangapps railway museum near Burnham on Crouch, in Essex, as also does the original nineteenth-century Marlesford sign.

The Memorial

The final word must be an amalgam of folk-lore and theatre with the key player being the driver of the last steam powered passenger train, and the source of the script being the town's doctor and raconteur of life on the Flier, Ian Allen. A synopsis of the plot is as follows.

One night in deepest dark and windy wet winter, in 1944, the last train of the evening had arrived and the engine was safe in its shed and driver Turner was well into celebrating his birthday at the Station Hotel bar. Fog detonators had already exploded as the train returned, as was the custom when staff birthdays occurred.

Suddenly the Hotel bar door burst open and the station-master approached John Turner with the news that a munitions train was at Ipswich *en route* to Framlingham with a load of bombs

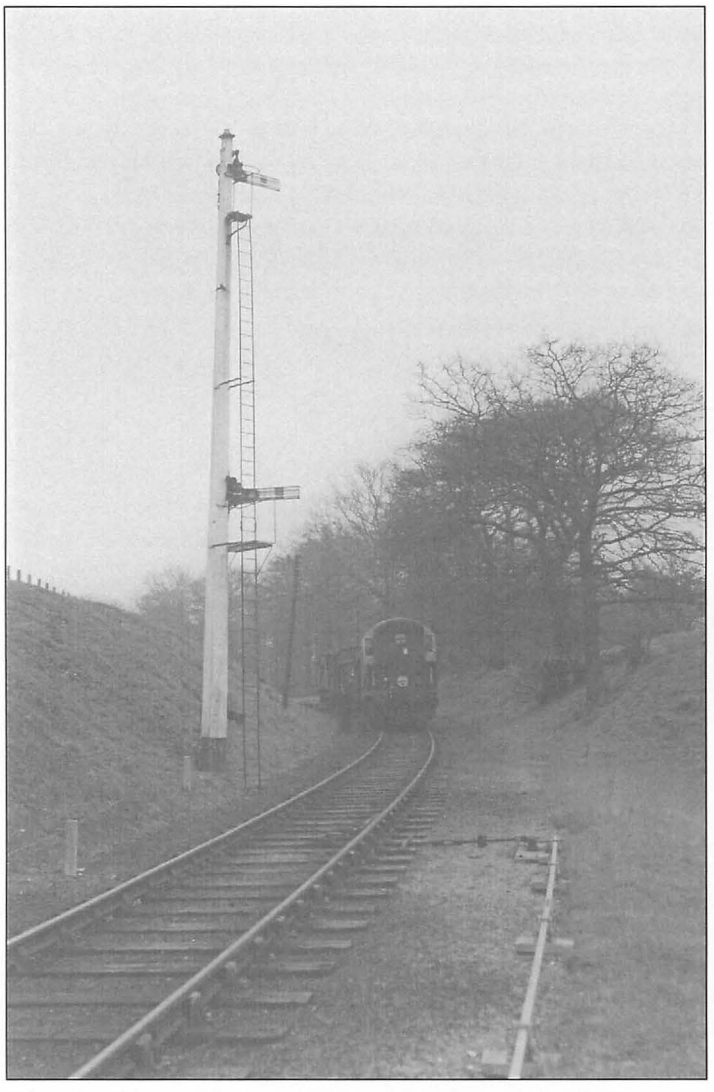

Fig. 42 Class 15 approaching the junction. Notice how the top home signal is set obliquely to the line so that it can be clearly read further down the line and round the curve. Dr. Allen.

for further delivery from the station, by road, to the base at Parham on the next day.

This was a serious matter, more than met the eye, because in order that the train might run onto the branch line at the Campsea Ashe junction it was necessary for the signalman there to have the key with which to unlock the points and signal system. This key was not a pocket key but a heavy thick solid cylindrical shaped brass lump about 18 inches long, 6lbs. in weight, now kept in Framlingham museum. The only way to get it to the signal box was by road because the engine had now lost steam. The only way by road was on a bicycle, and the only man still officially on duty was John Turner.

It was still raining and the light from his bicycle lamp was minimal, in accordance with the rules of black-out. With considerable reluctance and much difficulty our hero mounted his bicycle and pursued a very indirect path along the road as far as Parham. He had been following the kerbside out of the corner of his misty eyes, but there was no kerbside until he reached the T-junction in Parham where he sub-consciously wondered why he could not remember such a sharp left hand bend in the road. However he trusted his eye in the matter and reached the point where the little bridge crosses the river; this was not where he was aiming to be and in his confusion steered into the cold waters of the now quite fast flowing river.

He swore mightily as he dropped the key but by chance a friend of his was walking home over the bridge and hearing something amiss enquired if he could help. The response was unprintable but it did persuade the newly arrived pedestrian to jump in and try to help recover the key.

Meanwhile, as the story develops, the home-guard units at Woodbridge and Framlingham, who had the same evening of the week for their

mock exercises, had agreed that it would add significance to their evening if they exchanged, i.e. the Woodbridge contingent were to conduct their exercise in Framlingham and vice versa. The Woodbridge home guard, now in "foreign" territory, were suddenly alerted on their march through Parham by strange sounds which were distinctly violent and argumentative. This demanded further enquiry, and the commander of the platoon insisted on the arrest of these two incomprehensible strangers of the night submerged in a river, under a bridge, as if to escape attention.

The result of the arrest led to a scene in Colchester barracks to which motorised transport had carried the miserable watermen under guard by a triumphant commander who was finally persuaded that perhaps he had made a mistake. The consequence of this was a rapid return in the wet night, to Parham bridge, accompanied by yet more khaki clad figures who arrived in 6 armoured cars and all jumped into the stream to try to find the necessary key.

In due course the dawn began to break, the key was found, and the decision was made that the quickest route to the signal-box was by the railway line. Not long after this the signalman at Campsea Ashe junction climbed the steps to his cabin and chanced to look out of the window along the curve of the branch line. The sight that met his eyes curdled the blood in his veins as he rapidly scrambled down the steps and ran as fast as he could to Campsea Ashe station to report that the Germans had invaded and were doubling up the line to do their damnedest and blow up the junction that led to Parham base.

It must be added that in the recorded interview with the compiler of this story of *All Change for Framlingham*, Dr. Allen said that he himself did not witness the event but he was authoritatively assured that it happened. Such a story, given a few minor variations on the facts, makes a delightful memorial to this example of a Suffolk way of life that is remembered by a diminishing circle of those who were part of it and who still cherish it in their own past.

Postscript

The word "last" is a provocative one for railway enthusiasts; yes, there was one more steam powered passenger train that ran when BR's General Manager came in his immaculate saloon, hauled by an equally dashing J15 and its tender. Two photographs of it, given me by Dr. Allen, record this special event.

Dr. Ian Allen is remembered with affection in all the villages and towns of East Suffolk where a railway line ran nearby. He had the reputation of getting to know about every unusual event on the tracks of the old Great Eastern Railway before ever it occurred and in time to photograph it.

Thanks are, doubtless, also due to his patients for their forbearance and, sometimes, long suffering!

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