



British Section

Newsletter

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Spring 2008

European Association of Railway Personnel

Association Européenne des Cheminots (AISBL)

International Association (A.R. 4.2.1985)

**International Non-governmental Organisation with advisory status to the
Council of Europe (6.4.1977)**

**International Non-governmental Organisation with consultative status to
the UN (decision E/ 2002/ of 22.07.2002) and member of the United
Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**

Registered address: A.E.C. - Kardinaal Mercierlaan, 33/31 - B-3001 Heverlee, Belgium.

**A.E.C. BRITISH SECTION NEWSLETTER, Vol. 12 No. 3
SPRING 2008**

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**A separate membership application form
is enclosed with this issue.**

The European web page is at: <http://www.A-E-C.net>

AEC France is at www.aecfrance.eu/)

AEC Italy is at www.aecitalia.org

AEC Latvia is at www.ldz.lv/biedriba/

AEC Spain is at www.aec-es.org

AEC Poland is at www.aecpl.republika.pl (*Private site, not officially recognised.*)

AEC Austria is at www.aec-oesterreich.at.tf

AEC in Romania is at www.aecaferom.xhost.ro

The **British Section Website** is at <http://www.aec-europe.org.uk>. You can also find the British Section Newsletter on line at the French and European websites by clicking on to the labelled link, and also at the ASLEF District 5 website at <http://www.aslef-dc5.org.uk/Members/europa.htm>

Editorial: A note from the President.

Urgent notice. The **deadline** for bookings through the British section for **European Days in Lyon**, France 17th – 23rd August, is **MARCH 7TH 2008**; my apologies for not having stated this in your last edition of the newsletter. If you wish to attend, please send your cheque for £200 **NOW** to Philip Worsfold. Cheques should be made **payable to Philip Worsfold**, not AEC. You can read the rest of the newsletter later!

Some of us will be going to Belgium in May for the European Days in Antwerp. It should be interesting, since it will be the last event before the three-yearly General Assembly in Lyon, during the European Days there, as mentioned above. The executive will be putting the final touches to the presentation of the revised statutes for formal approval. In this regard, there has been considerable correspondence with the Belgian lawyer and the Belgian Minister of Justice, to ensure that the new statutes comply with Belgian law. One outcome has been that for national sections such as ours, our own national law takes precedence, although there will be restrictions debarring members who attend the executive committee meetings also voting in the General Assembly – they are there to do the bidding of the membership! Your president has been kept quite busy providing translations for the Anglophone members of the committee. If British members want copies, please let the secretary know, sending a stamped (large) addressed C5 envelope if you require paper copies. I would emphasise that the effect on the British general membership will be zero. At the Lyon General Assembly, the present European Bureau will be standing down, and a new Bureau elected. (The European Bureau is formed of the European officers. Together with the Presidents of the national sections, it forms the Executive committee.) Our present European President, Jean-Pierre Estival, will not be standing for re-election. However I have on your behalf congratulated him on his appointment within the Directorate of INGO's, to the post of President of the new sub commission for 'Transport and infrastructure issues' for a period of four years.

With regard to European issues, I had only a small response to my e-mail round-robin concerning the possibility of the British section contributing to the AEC's discussions which take place at European level as part of our status as an International Non- governmental Organisation with consultative/advisory status to the Council of Europe and the U.N. In order to maintain this status, it is obligatory that we do respond in some manner. This will involve more work and attending meetings in Europe. There was one positive response, several people who would like to contribute something if they could find the time; and some who were interested only in our social activities. Since my quick 'survey' was addressed to e-mail users only, there may be some of you out there, who would still like to add your comment. If so, it's not too late; the questions were:

1. Whether this is how the British membership sees the way forward.
2. If so, the ability of the British section to contribute anything useful.
3. Whether you, personally, have any interest in these matters.
4. Whether you are willing to commit yourself and your time to active participation in the affairs of the AEC at European level, which could involve attending meetings in Europe.

I look forward to hearing from you.

We have been invited to send an observer to the Annual general meeting of the German section on 12th April. Patrick Rigby, our Vice-president has agreed to attend on our behalf.

Philip Worsfold and the production team.

Recruitment

Bright ideas should be discussed with **Bob Clark**. Enquiries about membership should be addressed to **Bill Andrews**. Their addresses and phone numbers are given below.

There is a separate membership application form with this edition of the newsletter. Please use it if you are able to recruit a new member. Recruit seven members and get your next year's subscription free!

COMMITTEE

The committee is as follows:

Honorary President:

Theo Steel (Retiring Project Director ONE Railway)

Past Honorary President:

Malcolm Southgate OBE (formerly Deputy Director, Eurostar)

Honorary Vice-president:

Colin Charman, MCIT, Eurostar (UK) Ltd,
Operations Safety & Standards Manager, Eurostar UK Ltd,

President:

Philip Worsfold, B.Sc., C.Eng., M.I.C.E.,

Vice-president:

Patrick Rigby,

Secretary:

Gerry Atkin M.I.L.T.,

Assistant Secretary:

Peter Davies

Visits Secretary (Co-opted):

At the Annual general meeting, this post was left vacant on a temporary basis.

Treasurer and Membership Secretary:

Bill Andrews,

Recruitment Secretary:

Bob Clark, 52 Farcroft Road, POOLE, Dorset. BH1 2 3BQ.

Tel: +44 07941 069 018 (mobile)

Auditor:

Mike Hill

TRAVEL NEWS

Rail Europe has moved with effect from 1st January 2008 from Piccadilly to No.1 Regent St, London SW1Y 1NR

(The Postcode shown is the general code for this address; this could change to a specific one for Rail Europe, now that the move has taken place.)

Non-Availability Of Staff Travel Facilities On “Grand Central Railway”

All staff travel facilities holders should note that staff travel facilities documents issued to active and retired safeguarded staff, and to active TOC New Entrants, are not available for use on Grand Central Railway services. This applies equally to any privilege/reduced rate tickets purchased using any of these documents.

The reason for this is that Grand Central Railway are not eligible to participate in the ATOC Staff Travel Scheme, and have not entered into an exchange of staff travel facilities arrangement with the Franchised TOC's.

(I understand that there may be a few exceptions, - ed.)

STOP PRESS: *Grand Central ARE accepting privilege tickets but only at inter-available fares as set by NEEC. For staff over 60, the GC Senior Citizens' fare is cheaper than a privilege ticket however. See RAIL magazine 586 27/2/08 - 11/3/08.*

French High-Speed Trains Capture Paris-Strasbourg Market Share Faster Than Expected

Culled from Forbes Financial magazine, (USA) 21st January 2008, via John Hayward.

PARIS (Thomson Financial) - High-speed train service between Paris and Strasbourg, which state-owned railway SNCF began in mid-2007, built up to a 60 pct market share at the expense of air transport by the end of October, much faster than forecast, Agence France-Presse reported, citing the railway.

Air France-KLM unit Air France had already cut back service between the cities last summer in anticipation of the competition. Air traffic between the cities fell 25% in 2007, the Strasbourg airport said.

EUROPEAN DAYS and OTHER EUROPEAN EVENTS

The current position is as follows:

- 25th – 31st May 2008 European Days in **Antwerp, Belgium. (Booking is now closed).**
- Autumn 2008 European Days and Congress in **Lyon, France. (Booking deadline through British section is 7th March 2008).**
- 24th – 30th May 2009 European Days in **Lüneburg, Germany** (feature in this edition)
- 20th – 29th Sept 2009 European Days in **York, England** (feature in this edition)
- Spring 2010 European Days in Santiago di Compostella, Spain.
- Autumn 2010 European Days in Poland

Forthcoming events in the German Programmes are;

- 12.03.2008 RV Rostock: Vortrag "Die Bürgerschaft" im Club.
- 15.03.2008 RV Frankfurt: Theaterabend
- 09.04.2008 RV Rostock: DB Regio Fahrplan im Club.
- 12.04.2008 **Delegatierentag der Sektion Deutschland**
- 13-19 04.08 RV Hagen: Flugzeug nach Portugal.
- 26.04.2008 RV Frankfurt: Schokoladenmuseum
- 14.05.2008 RV Rostock: Bundestaginformationen im Club
- 21.05.2008 RV Rostock: Rügenrundfahrt
- 11.06.2008 RV Rostock: Vortrag ‚Vorzugevollmacht‘ im Club
- 14.06.2008 RV Frankfurt: Fahrt nach Gelnhausen
- 26.07.2008 RV Hamburg: Grillfest in Meckelfeld
- 10.09.2008 RV Rostock: Vortrag ‚Erste Hilfe‘ im Club
- 08.10.2008 RV Rostock: Kegeln im Brauereikeller
- 27-29.10.08 RV Hagen: Reise auf ein Weingut mit Ausflug nach Trier

EUROPÄISCHE TREFFEN

- 25.05.- 31.05.2008 Europ. Tage in Antwerpen, Belgien
- 18.08.- 23.08.2008 Europ. Tage und Hauptversammlung
in Lyon, Frankreich
- 24.05.- 30.05.2009 Europ. Tage in Lüneburg, Deutschland
- Sept/Okt. 2009 Europ. Tage in York, Großbritannien
- Frühjahr 2010 Europ. Tage in Santiago de Compostella,
Spanien

EUROPEAN DAYS, 2008 in LYON

The French section is organising European days in Lyon and surrounding area in 2008, **from Sunday 17 August to Saturday 23 August 2008.**

The accommodation is to be in a two star hotel (French standards) situated in the centre of Lyon, 400 metres from Perrache railway station and 150 metres from a tram stop.

This situation gives simple access from both the Lyon-Part-Dieu-TGV station and from Lyon-Perrache station.

From the hotel it is simple to reach the tourist centres (Gallo-romaine, medieval, renaissance or classic) on pedestrianised streets or by public transport (metro, bus, funiculars).

The stay will allow you to discover Lyon and the Rhône-Alpes region.

We expect the members of the Administrative Council on Sunday 16 August and the participants to the European Days on Monday 17 August.

Sunday 17 August Arrival of members of the Administrative Council
by train to Lyon-Perrache station.
Check into hotel and dinner.

Monday 18 August Arrival of participants to the European days
Welcome at Lyon-Perrache station
9h00-12h00 Administrative Council
12h30 lunch
14h 30-19h00 General Assembly
19h30 Opening of European Days, welcome at hotel Kyriad
20h30 Dinner at hotel Kyriad

Tuesday 19 August **DISCOVERING LYON**
7h30 to 8h30 breakfast
9h00 discover Lyon (on foot and by public transport)
12h45 meal at hotel Kyriad
14h30 visit to Fourvière (Gallo-romaine site, Byzantine basilica
and view of the town)
19h30 dinner at hotel Kyriad

Wednesday 20 August **THE RHONE VALLEY AND THE STEAM TRAIN**
7h30-8h15 breakfast
8h45 depart by bus for Tournon
10h00 depart by steam train to Lamastre (33 Km in narrow
gauge train – the carriages and engines are classed as historic
monuments)
12h30 lunch at Lamastre
15h00 depart from Lamastre to Tournon
17h00 return by bus to Lyon following the Rhône valley
19h30 dinner at hotel Kyriad
bus round trip 140 km

Thursday 21 August **MEDIEVAL VILLAGE AND THE BEAUJOLAIS**
7h00 to 9h00 breakfast
9h00 depart by bus
10h00 visit to the wine museum
12h30 lunch at Romanèche-Thorins
16h00 visit to the medieval village of Oingt
18h00 return to Lyon via the Beaujolais
19h30 dinner at hotel Kyriad
bus round trip 100 km

Friday 22 August VISIT AROUND LYON BY COACH
7h30 to 8h30 breakfast
9h30 Visit around Lyon
12h30 lunch at hotel Kyriad

Afternoon free

19h30 gala evening

Saturday 23 August DEPARTURE
7h00 to 9h30 breakfast
Depart from Lyon-Perrache station

The Programme is liable to modification

COST OF EVENT

**From dinner on Monday 18.08.2008 to Saturday 23.08.2008 after breakfast
590Euros**

This price includes:

Transfers from station to hotel-station-hotel.
Accommodation (twin, double or single).
Full pension.
Guided visits
All rooms are air conditioned, with shower and W.C.

Special conditions

Arrival on Sunday 17.08.2008 supplement per person of: **75 €**
Extension of stay per day per person: **75 €**
Single room supplement: per night and per person: **21 €**

A few 3 bedded rooms are available; small reduction of price: **10 €**

Transfer from the airport is at the cost of participants

For groups wishing to use a coach, please consult the organisers.

Insurance to cover repatriation is not included in the cost of the event

DEPOSIT: **285€ to pay before 15.03.2008**
BALANCE: **to pay before 15.07.2008**

CANCELLATION:

Cancellations **after 15 May 2008** will involve the forfeiture of: **50 €**

BOOKINGS:

Bookings accompanied by the deposit, by cheque or bankers order (virement - Relay) are to be sent to:

Claudius RIVEL
E-mail : Rivelclaudius@aol.com

They must arrive by **15 March 2008** at the latest and mention:

- family names, first name and address.
- type of room required (double, single or twin)
- date and time of arrival.
- date and time of departure.

Attention :

The number of places offered is limited to 240

Reservations will be closed when this number is reached.

PAYMENT :

by bank draft (virement, Relay etc) addressed to:

Name of account: A.E.C. Journées Européennes LYON 2008

Bank: La banque postale centre de Lyon F-69900 LYON Cedex 20

IBAN: FR 16 20041 01007 1544979Y038 82

SWIFT (BIC): PSSTFRPLYO

Contacts :

Jacques MATTER

E-Mail : jack.matter@cegetel.net

Max PONTET -Tel. 00 33 (0) 4 66 29 69 10

Booking through the British section:

Bookings can be arranged through the British section, as for previous European Days. To be included, you should send a **deposit of £200** per person to Philip Worsfold by **Friday 7th March 2007 at the very latest**. Bookings received after this date cannot be considered. **Cheques should be made payable to Philip Worsfold** and not to AEC. The deposit includes an allowance for bank transfer costs. Any excess will be credited towards the final payment.

The event is arranged by the French section of AEC, which is the responsible organiser. Payment through the British section is offered purely to minimise the cost of money transfer. It does not act as a travel agency and does not make travel arrangements. Neither the British section of AEC, nor any individual officer thereof can accept responsibility for any problems arising. You will be responsible personally for your payments and for any losses that may be incurred. You are advised to take out appropriate insurance cover.

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Provisional Programme for

EUROPEAN DAYS FROM 24.05. UNTIL 30.05.2009 IN LÜNEBURG (GERMANY).

Sunday, 24.05.2009

Arrival of the Executive committee members

Arrival of the delegates for the committee meeting at **Lüneburg** railway station; Transfer from Lüneburg station to Hotel Seminaris after registration, at extra cost.

20h00

Evening meal in Hotel Seminaris.

Monday, 25.05.2009

Committee meeting

until 10h00

Breakfast in Dining room.

12h00

Lunch for the delegates of the committee meeting in the Town hall.

13h30 Meeting of the Committee: Timing according to the Agenda.
until 18h00 Arrival of the other members at **Lüneburg** railway station.
Free transfer from railway station to Hotel Seminaris after registration.

19h00 Grand opening of European Days in Lüneburg 2009.
20h00 Dinner in Hotel Seminaris. Musical entertainment.

Tuesday, 26.05.2009 *Lüneburg Day*

07h00 -08h45 Breakfast in Dining room.
09h00 Tour of the town with guide through the Old Town, starting from the hotel.
10h30 Reception of the members in the Huldigungssaal (Council Chamber) of the Town Hall by the Mayor, Herr Mädge.
13h00 Lunch in Hotel Seminaris.
15h00 -17h00 Travel to and visit the Salt Museum.
Escorted walk in the Old Town centre of von Lüneburg.
19h00 Evening meal in Hotel Seminaris. Cosy end to the day.
20h00 Performance by a musical group.

Wednesday, 27.05.2009 *Hamburg Day*

07h00 -08h45 Breakfast in Dining room.
09h00 Journry by coach to Hamburg.
10h00 Visit to St. Michaeliskirche, the Landingstage und the „Altes Elbtunnel“. (Old Tunnel under the Elbe River)
11h00 -12h30 Trip in small boats Rundfahrt auf kleinen Barkassen around Hamburg port.
Journey in our bus on the Elbchaussee and through Blankenese (Principal district of the rich merchant families).
13h00 Lunch in ther ‚Willkommhöft‘ Ship greetings point at Schulau on the bank of the Elbe. Greeting of arriving and departing ships by playing the National anthem of the country of registration.
14h00 Tour around Hamburg in our buses.
15h00 -17h30 Stroll through the luxury shopping streets in the Alster: Jungfernstieg, Große Bleichen, Neuer Wall und Mönckeberg Straße (our „Mö“).
Look at the computer controlled marshalling yard at Maschen.
19h00 Evening meal in Hotel Seminaris. Cosy end to the day.

Thursday, 28.05.2009 *Hansestadt Lübeck Day*

07h00 -08h30 Breakfast buffet in Dining room.
08h30 Journey by coach to the Hanseatic League town of Lübeck.
09h00 Visit to the Boat lift at Scharnebek.
10h30 Guided tour through the Old Town of Lübeck.
12h30 -14h00 Lunch in the historic restaurant of the Shipping Company.
14h30 Trip by ship on the Trave estuary and into the Baltic Sea.
16h00 Return journey on the bus through the Ratzeburg sea marshes to Lüneburg.
If possible, visit to the cathedral in Ratzeburg.
19h00 Evening meal in Hotel Seminaris.

Friday, 29.05.2009 *Lüneburg Heath Day*

07h00 -08h45 Breakfast buffet in Dining room.
09h00 Bus journey to Undeloh in the middle of the heathland.

10h00 Walk or trip by horse drawn carriage in the ‚Naturpark Lüneburger Heide‘ (Lüneburg Heath Natural Park). Over a distance of about 20km no motor traffic is allowed. To reach the idyllic little village of the heath Wilsede, the only possibilities are: on foot, by bike or by horse drawn carriage. The distance from Undeloh to Wilsede is 4 km.

12h00 Lunch in "Wilseder Hof".

13h30 Return trip in the horse drawn carriage, or walking to Undeloh. Free time for visit to places on the heath or a coffee in the numerous small guesthouses. Possibility to buy souvenirs.

16h00 Return journey by bus to the hotel. - Free time.

19h00 Gala evening and ball, with dance band, floral and table decorations. Various dishes and drinks, presentation of honours, handing over of the symbols of AEC: the banner, the key, the cushion and the lantern.

Saturday, 30.05.2009 *Departure*

07h00 -10h00 Breakfast buffet in Dining room. Morning free at your disposal. Departure of delegates. Luggage transfer to Lüneburg railway station. Possibility of a direct transfer to Hamburg at extra cost.

Cost:

From evening meal on Monday 24.05. until breakfast on Saturday 30.05.2009: **490 €**

From evening meal on Sunday 23.05. until breakfast on Saturday 30.05.2009: **565 €**

per person in double room.

Single room supplement: 20 € per Night.

The basic package includes: 5 night's stay with full board in Hotel "SEMINARIS" in Lüneburg.

Tours with guided explanations, Opening evening and Gala evening with a dance band.

Included in the price are catering, accommodation, trips and visits and the transfer from Lüneburg railway station; each meal includes a drink of your choice.

Enquiries about booking or costs should be addressed to the treasurer of the German section, Frau Marita Kynast-Kohl, Fax: 05725 915838 or Email: marita.kynast-kohl@bahn.de

Bookings with a deposit of 250 Euro per person, with details of single or double room (smoking or non smoking) and arrival times should be sent, before 15.01.2009, to the treasurer of the German section Frau Marita Kynast-Kohl.

**Bankverbindung: A.E.C.-Sektion Deutschland,
Sparda Bank Hannover, Konto: 100924814 - BLZ: 25090500
IBAN: DE55250905000100924814 – BIG: GENODEF1S09**

Final payment: 240 Euro (or more, according to booking) before 30.03.2009 to the same account.

Hotel address: Hotel SEMINARIS Lüneburg, Soltau Straße 3, D-21335 LÜNEBURG
Tel. +49 (0) 4131 7130 – Fax: +49 (0) 4131 713128
Email: lueneburg@seminaris.de - Internet: www.seminaris.de/lueneburg

The event is arranged by the German section of AEC, which is the responsible organiser. Payment through the British section will be offered purely to minimise the cost of money transfer. The deposit required will be decided later in the year, depending on exchange rates but will not be less than £200. The British section does not act as a travel agency and does not make travel arrangements. Neither the British section of AEC, nor any individual officer thereof can accept responsibility for any problems arising. You will be responsible personally for your payments and for any losses that may be incurred. You are advised to take out appropriate insurance cover.

EUROPEAN DAYS IN YORK, 20th – 26th SEPTEMBER 2009

Hotel: Ramada Encore Hotel, York

Your Hotel is very centrally situated, a short walk from the railway station. Perhaps after arrival, if time permits, a walk to the famous “Shambles” or a visit to York Minster. Discount tickets will be available on the day from AEC UK for a sightseeing bus with commentary around York at £7 each.

Sunday 20th September 2009

Arrival of some delegates (Executive Committee) at Ramada Encore Hotel Central York.

Executive Committee Meeting in the Conference room at the Ramada Encore Hotel.

Monday 21st September 2009

Continental Breakfast in Ramada Encore Hotel Central York.

Other delegates arriving by rail or air.

Opening Ceremony at Priory Centre 16.30 hrs

Evening Meal at local Italian Restaurant. (Possible Two Sittings) (one drink included)

Tuesday 22nd September 2009

Continental Breakfast in Ramada Encore Hotel Central York.

Whitby and the local Countryside to include a Fish & Chips lunch with a cup of tea.
Evening Meal at Russells Carvery with one drink per person.

Wednesday 23rd September 2009

Continental Breakfast in Ramada Encore Hotel Central York.

We visit Castle Howard with a 2 course buffet lunch (water on the tables)

Medieval Banquet Evening Meal and Entertainment.

Thursday 24th September 2009

Continental Breakfast in Ramada Encore Hotel Central York.

A trip on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway from Grosmont to Pickering.

We will be having a traditional English Ploughman's lunch and a Pint of beer at local Hotel

Evening Meal will be at Russells Carvery with one drink per person

Friday 25th September 2009

Continental Breakfast in Ramada Encore Hotel Central York.

We have the morning free for shopping.

Bettys is your destination for lunch time (you will have a £10 voucher)

Early afternoon we visit the famous **Jorvik Centre**

Tonight we have the **Lord Mayors Reception in the Great Hall of the National Railway Museum, York**, followed by our **Gala Dinner** in the NRM, including the closing ceremony followed by music for dancing.

Saturday 26th September 2009

After a Continental Breakfast in Ramada Encore Hotel it's Homeward Bound.

NOTE EXTRA DAYS MAY BE ADDED SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY AT £80 DOUBLE/TWIN & £70 SINGLE PROVIDED REQUESTED ON INITIAL BOOKING FORM.

- **THIS PROGRAMME IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE** -

Special dietary requirements will be accommodated wherever possible.

Due to restraints on accommodation, the total number of delegates is limited to a maximum of 140 persons, including members of the executive committee. It may become necessary to limit the size of individual national delegations.

Booking arrangements and application forms will appear in a later edition of the newsletter.

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BE SURE TO CHANGE TRAINS AT GARE DU NORD

By Jan Morris

From 'The Financial Times' - Published 5th January 2008, via John Hayward.

I walked into our local café the other day and saw a friend, alone at a table, deep in a paperback book with an air of profound contentment.

I knew exactly what he was feeling, because I recognised the book: it was the latest edition of Thomas Cook's "European Rail Timetable", one of the very best books to spend a solitary lunchtime with or to keep permanently on your bedside table.

Railway timetables have a distinguished literary history in Britain. For more than a century, Bradshaw's Monthly Railway Guide was so familiar an English institution that its name went into the language - and although the guide came to an end in 1966, it still gets an entry in the Oxford Companion to English Literature.

Plotting the fastest cross-country railway journey in Bradshaw was a popular parlour game in middle-class Victorian Britain, in the days when a mesh of narrow-gauge lines added to the challenge. The name crops up in many a novel or thriller of the steam age, when a cabinet minister needs an express train to rush him to a vital meeting at the House of Commons or some rogue in a white dinner jacket plans a getaway via the ferry at Harwich.

Thomas Cook's monthly manual, itself 130 years old, is already something of an institution too, not least in its independent traveller's edition, which is the one I have at my bedside. Its in-house nickname, the publishers tell me, is ETT (as in

"European Time Table") and this itself has a steamy touch of tradition to it, because the "TT" is a memory of the days before a Time Table became a Time-table and then a Timetable. In the travel trade, I gather, the book is familiarly called simply Cook's, just as George Bradshaw Esq. of Manchester has faded into history's memory simply as Bradshaw.

One of the perennial fascinations of the railway timetable, then as now, is its infinite resource of exceptions, alternatives and all but inexplicable cross-references. Thomas Cook's European Rail Timetable mercifully spares us the labyrinthine complexities of fares, perhaps expecting us, like Sherlock Holmes, to get somebody else to do the booking.

In all other ways it is, like its predecessor, a delightful prodigy of complication. No list of symbols on a word processor can do justice to its virtuoso command of footnote symbols: one device, for instance, to warn us that The Train Does Not Stop; another to "separate two trains in the same column between which no connection is possible"; and a plethora of significant letters and numerals and innumerable minute pictures of ships or buses or beds or brimming wineglasses or little two-storey houses to warn you of frontier posts ahead.

I have always loved railway timetables but it is only now, I think, as we enter perhaps a new railway age that they are reaching an apogee. A sleeper to Aberdeen in Scotland or Penzance in the far south-west of England used to be the summit of Bradshaw's ambitions but now the whole continent of Europe falls within the province of its successor. Cook's handsomely recognises this fulfilment. The later Bradshaw's used to be decidedly sober productions, perhaps because Mr Bradshaw was a Quaker, but Thomas Cook's contemporary editions are luxurious shiny jobs, with pictures of sleek super-trains streaming across their covers (in the autumn edition, we are told, they showed "an electric Desiro train on test near Prohoma in Greece").

For yes, I suppose the railway timetables appeal most of all to the train buffs who have been recognising locomotive types, collecting engine numbers and timing train arrivals since the first Bradshaw was published in 1841. They cluster still at the far ends of railway platforms throughout the kingdom, indomitable in their obsession, and I would guess that Cook's is bedtime reading for half of them.

There is so much to learn from this arcane repository of knowledge. Had you ever heard of the electric Desiro train before? For that matter did you know the existence of the Finnish Pendolino train, or the Spanish AVE (short for Alta Velocidad Española), which is the fastest train in the world? And would you ever have guessed that in Switzerland there are some 40 different railway companies, among them "Ferrovie Autolinee Regionali Ticinesi", whose acronym is Fart?

The joy of them, of course, generally lies not in the reality, but in the imagination. Cook's is the Bible of the Virtual Traveller. Snug in bed with a glass of old Laphroaig, with the household asleep around you, you may travel at ease in those realms of gold we read about in the poets. Hardly less lyrical than Keats is Thomas Cook on form - by which I mean, seized from his own pages, footnotes and all, and liberated in your mind to go with him where you will.

Perhaps you will feel like taking a trip, for example, from Palermo to Kaliningrad: from the heart of Sicily to the last foothold of Russia in Europe. Half an hour's consultation, and you are already on your way. Palermo - Rome - Bologna - Vienna - Petrovice -

Wroclaw - Poznan - Tczew and Braniewo and finally Kaliningrad, the old stronghold of the Teutonic Knights, on the frigid Baltic shore.

Or perhaps you would prefer something more modest, like a rack railway in the Alps somewhere or a toddle through Mitteleuropa? Flick a few pages, and here's an enticing-looking line from Chur to Arosa (though we must remember that trains stop at Langwies only by request). Or how about a Finnish jaunt, from Jyväskylä to Vaasa? Oh no, that's no good - on Mondays you have to change at Seinäjoki - but we could pop over to Hungary and make the trip from Kiskunfélegyháza to Szentés, if only to say we'd done it.

Just imagine it all - the strange station names flashing by, the sunbaked vineyards of Lampedusa's Sicily giving way to the marshlands of East Prussia - the thump and swish of your trains, Polish pancakes in the restaurant car, the creak of the woodwork and the breathy croak of the whistle - the smell of it all, the vibrations, the sounds of strange vowels, the quick hop to the platform to pick up a news- paper at Klagenfurt - could anything be more satisfying, as you lie there in the maplight, your beloved perhaps snoring peacefully beside you, and outside your windows only the homely sounds of the garbage-men doing their rounds, or a couple of maudlin drunks on their way home from the pub?

I asked the man in the café if he was planning a train journey somewhere. "Tunisia," he said, his eyes burning with the thought of it. "Eurostar to Avignon. TVC [the local steam service] down to Marseille, and there's plenty of sailings from there, I see from Cook's. And then, I've been thinking, on the way back we could take a boat to Athens, pick up one of those Desiro trains - have you tried them? - and then, oh I don't know, maybe find a train to Venice and get on a TGV to Strasbourg perhaps, up to Brussels and then, bingo, it's Eurostar and home!"

For Cook's is not really made for day-dreaming, any more than Bradshaw was devised as an after-dinner entertainment at the vicarage. It was made for the serious journey planner. I have never used my copy to arrange such a happily lackadaisical journey as my friend's to Tunisia, making up his mind as he went along, and relying on Cook's for the logistics.

A couple of years ago, though, I did use my copy of the great work meticulously to plan a journey in advance for this newspaper, and this is how it went.

From my home in north Wales I took the narrow-gauge steam train from Porthmadog to Blaenau Ffestiniog, where I boarded a railcar of the Conway Valley Railway to Llandudno Junction. A Virgin Rail Pendolino whisked me to Euston in London, where, using my through ticket, I went by London Underground to Waterloo. There, a Eurostar took me under the English Channel to Gare du Nord in Paris, where I changed stations and boarded the last frail remnant of the original Orient Express, then running the final few months of its route to Vienna. Finally a train called the Goldoni took me southwards into Italy to drop me at a remote small station called Villa Opicina, where by trundling my baggage down a platform, along a country lane and into a village, I clambered aboard the funicular tram of the Ferrovia Elettrica, which took me precipitously down the mountainside to my destination, Trieste.

It all went like clockwork. It was all thanks to Mr Cook. I obeyed his tables meticulously. I was careful to make sure that I did not in error board the Milan train at Mestre, or get carried past Villa Opicina all the way to Ljubljana. I took with me, as

he advised, a spare pair of spectacles and a universal bath plug (so often missing, as he warned me, from washbasins), and the very first thing I did when I got into bed that night was to get out my European Rail Timetable and retrace the whole delightful odyssey, from one end of Europe to the other, consulting footnotes all the way.

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ST PANCRAS CHAPLAIN

A newspaper article prompted the following musings passed on by John Hayward.

A link between members of the clergy and a liking for trains, full-size or model, is something that has been remarked on in the past many times in this country. Actually I think it extends to lay members of the Church as well. Anyway what I think is Britain's 'Jewel in the Crown' of railway stations, St Pancras International, is to have its own Chaplain, the Reverend Jonathan Baker of St John's, Cleckheaton.

One thing that will not have pleased local readers of the report (below) is that the headline describes him as a Dewsbury vicar. They are part of the same local authority but not of the same Anglican Deanery and people in Cleckheaton would not normally have much cause to go to Dewsbury.

Here is the article:

Dewsbury vicar finds his station in life...at St Pancras

A CLECKHEATON vicar is to take on a new parish with a potential congregation of 40 million. He will be the first chaplain to St Pancras International railway station – his latest step in a lifelong fascination with the railways.

St Pancras, which recently re-opened as the country's rail link with mainland Europe, is known as "the cathedral" of railway stations. The Rev Johnathan Barker, 48, will be leaving St John the Evangelist Church at Cleckheaton to take up his appointment there. His love of the railways began as a boy in Chorley in Lancashire when his family lived near the railway line. The fascination is still with him today, and he takes three magazines on railway issues every month.

"I used to go trainspotting as a kid," he said. "The Glasgow to London line was set in beautiful countryside and my friends and I used to get on a train to London to visit the depots aged only 12."

The new St Pancras is expected to handle 40m passengers a year, and it will be among them that Mr Barker will carry out his pastoral work.

The Rev Nicholas Wheeler, Rector of the Old St Pancras team ministry, said:

"Railway stations are places where you can see sad events, such as the departure of loved ones or great joy in their arrival and we thought we could make a contribution." One factor in making the appointment was the experience of the July 7 bombings in London.

"One of things we discovered at 7/7 was how important it was to have a presence within the station and bring a multi-faith pastoral team together," said Mr Wheeler.

RECENT EVENTS...

We have continued to meet at the 'Lord Moon of the Mall' once a month and in addition had a lunchtime session at the 'Royal Oak' on Thursday 9th January. After lunch, John Batts entertained us with several well loved films from the steam era,

including 'Night Mail', made for the Post Office but now gloriously restored using digital techniques. Afterwards we moved on to the Lord Moon of the Mall for our regular reunion. John Woods and Patrick Rigby managed another visit to Tonbridge Wells to see Mike Atkin, who is still unwell.

... AND THINGS TO COME

- Reunions in London continue to take place at the '**Lord Moon of the Mall**' on the **second Thursday of each month**, so the dates from now on are, **13th March** (2008 is a leap year), **10th April**, **8th May**, **12th June** and **10th July 2008**. **Please remember that, generally, the last Wednesday of the month** is earmarked for possible lunchtime talks and visits. Forthcoming '**last Wednesday**' dates are **26th March**, **30th April**, **28th May**, **25th June** and **30th July 2008**. Further details are available from John Woods on e-mail to jauwoods@googlemail.com.

ASSOCIATION TIES AND BADGES.

In common with other sections, the British section of the Association has a necktie and a badge. Our particular items are common to both the British and Belgian sections. We have produced the ties and the Belgian section, the badges. I am sorry that we do not have a specific item for ladies.

Ties are now available, at £4.50 plus postage, and badges are again in stock in small numbers, at £1.50 each, including postage. These items are available from **the President, Philip Worsfold**. Please contact him first by phone to check availability.

GREAT BRITAIN ALL LINE TIMETABLE THOMAS COOK EUROPEAN TIMETABLE

John Woods holds a copy of the last official ATOC Great Britain All Line Timetable, which will become a historic document on 10th December, when the new winter timetable starts. A timetable in identical format (but lacking a map) is now published by The Stationery Office at £15-00. Details are now available on line, and on CD-Rom (Platform 5 Publications, Sheffield). An all-line timetable is also produced by Middleton Press, price about £14-95, in A5 format but with two mini pages per page, printed at half the size of the tables in the TSO publication, but as a result, only half the thickness. Train operators produce their own pocket timetables. Remember that cross country services are now operated by Cross Country Trains amongst other franchise reallocations.

Philip Worsfold has a recent Cooks European Rail and Shipping Services timetable, publication of which is set to continue. This timetable also contains the majority of British services in a succinct, abbreviated form.

AND FOR THE FUTURE?

We shall endeavour to continue the production of these three-monthly newsletters to get information to you. They will still be mostly information with just the occasional article. So please, put pen to paper. We need to build up a library of articles. Please keep in touch and let us have your information, your views and your ideas. Next copy deadline is **10th May 2008** – so that we can publish before European Days.

Notice is hereby given that the 20th Annual General Meeting of the British Section of AEC will take place at the ROYAL OAK, 44, Tabard Street, London SE1* on Thursday 24th April 2008, commencing at 1630hrs. Items for the agenda, including those for "Any Other Business" should be sent, in writing, or by e-mail to the Secretary, Gerry Atkin, to reach him not later than Monday 7th April 2008.

DRAFT AGENDA

(Amendments will be announced at the meeting)

1. Opening remarks and Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the 19th Annual General meeting of 26th April 2007.
3. Matters Arising.
4. Correspondence.
5. President's Report.
6. Reports from Officers.
 - Secretary
 - Visits Secretary
 - Membership Secretary
 - Recruitment Secretary
7. Treasurer's Report and Accounts.
8. Election of Officers for a period of one year, from 15th May 2008.
 - Secretary
 - Asst Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Visits secretary
 - Recruitment Secretary

(The President was elected in 2006 for a period of four years. Election of a new President is due in 2010)
9. Appointment of Auditor
10. Nomination of delegates for Congress. (New Belgian law.)
11. Dates and Venues for forthcoming European Days.
12. Events Programme.
13. The future of AEC in Europe
14. Any Other Business (see note above).
15. Proposed date and venue for 2009 Annual General Meeting

*The **Royal Oak** is about ten minutes walk from London Bridge Station, just off Borough High Street, near St George the Martyr Church. The nearest Underground station is Borough (Northern Line, City branch).

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SUMMARY OF DATES

London Reunions on the second Thursday of the month at the "Lord Moon of the Mall", Whitehall, London:

13th March, 10th April, 8th May, 12th June and 10th July 2008 etc. Please note that Easter Sunday is 23rd March.

Dates reserved for talks or visits on the last Wednesday of the month:

25th March, 28th May (note: during European Days), 25th June and 30th July 2008 etc. The AGM is on THURSDAY 24th April. See above.

A.E.C. MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Other*. Surname:.....Initials:.....

Forename:.....

Job Description:.....

Work Address:.....

Town/City:..... Postcode:.....

Internal Phone:..... Fax:.....

External Phone:..... Fax:.....

Micromail Box No:..... E-mail Address:.....

ACTIVE / RETIRED *

Home Address:.....

Town/City:..... Postcode:.....

Telephone:..... Include in Directory?: YES/NO *

Mobile:..... Include in Directory?: YES/NO *
(*delete as applicable)

Membership of the A.E.C. costs only £5.00 per annum and is open to anyone in the railway industry without qualification. However, if you would like to complete the following statement, please do so. It would be helpful for us to know.

I can speak the following language(s) (state how well, e.g. fluent, fair, a little)

.....

I should like to join the Association Européenne des Cheminots.

Signature.....

Data supplied will be kept on a computer database. Home, **where authorised above** and Work telephone and Fax numbers and electronic mail addresses can be divulged to other members **only**.

Please make cheques/PO's for £5.00 payable to: "A.E.C."

Send this application to:

Mr W. Andrews, Hon. Treasurer, A.E.C.

32, Greet Road,

LANCING. BN15 9NS

E-mail: fam.andrews@ntlworld.com

*If you encourage 7 people to join within your subscription year, the next year's subscription is **free!***