

Newsletter of
THE FRIENDS OF THE FAR NORTH LINE
Cairdean Na Loine Tuath

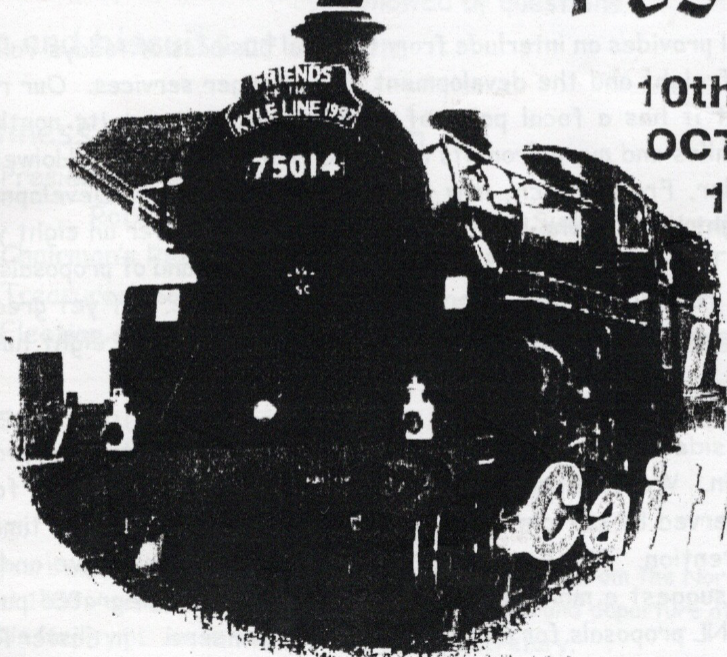
The campaign group for rail, north of Inverness, lobbying for improved services for the local
Issue 11 user, tourist and freight operator

October 1998

Highland Railway
HERITAGE

Highland Steam Festival

10th - 11th
OCTOBER
1998



Caithness

BETWEEN THURSO & WICK

Booking in person at Wick, Thurso or Dornoch Tourist Offices
from Monday 21st September.

A small number of seats may be available on the day.

Price to non-members for this special issue - 50p

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OFFICE BEARERS

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Chairman:	John Melling
Hon. Secretary:	Keith Tyler
Hon. Treasurer:	Keith Harman
Membership Secretary:	Frank Spaven
Newsletter Editor:	Roger Piercy
Committee Members:	
	Jim Fry
	John Moore
	Ron Stevenson

Steam Today - Traffic Tomorrow

Return to Steam - the weekend of October 10 - 11 sees steam on the Far North Line for the first time for 30 years. FOFNL welcomes all visitors to the Line - we hope you enjoy the space of the north, and especially the climb from Invershin and the pull over the Flow Country to the County March. We thank Highland Railway Heritage of which we are a constituent partner for their initiative in this promotion. The outline timetable of how this train progresses north on Saturday 10th October and returns south on the Sunday is included in a special section of this newsletter. (For Internet readers who may be interested we have reproduced the operating timetable that was used)

In the north local tickets for steam shuttle runs between Wick and Thurso and vice versa on 10th and 11th October are on sale at £4 single (£2 for children) through the Tourist Information Centres at Thurso, Wick and Dornoch. Further south the steam train will run to and from Kyle of Lochalsh on Sunday 4th October, and from Inverness to Aviemore, Perth and Stirling on 17th October. Tickets can be obtained for these services through the Lairg Tourist Information Centre.

The Steam Festival provides an interlude from the real business of today's railway which is the haulage of freight and the development of passenger services. Our rural railway is unique in that it has a focal point of economic activity at its northern extremity which is 250 miles and more from its markets. The work of John Holwell of EWS, and of our founder, Frank Roach, now North Highland Railway Development Officer, in bringing freight back to the Line some three years ago after an eight year gap is to be commended. The development of sidings at Invergordon and of proposals for loading of timber on the running lines at several places are welcome. Of yet greater benefit would be a decision to go ahead with a Road/Rail interchange freight hub in Caithness.

On the passenger side FOFNL is encouraged by the success of the Dingwall - Inverness commuter train. We continue to press for this to start at Tain and for a station at Beaully to be served by certain trains south of Dingwall. End to end timings continue to have our attention. The Government's Rural Transport initiative and its Transport White Paper suggest a more accommodating approach to integrated public transport provision. FOFNL proposals for an enhanced passenger service in Easter Ross are included in an article elsewhere in this newsletter.

The Annual General Meeting is at Tain on Saturday 7th November. It promises to be an interesting afternoon, please come along.

John Melling, Chairman

Annual General Meeting

Saturday 7th November, 3.15pm

Mansfield House Hotel, Tain

Speaker:

Nigel Wunsch, Business Development Manager, Railtrack Scotland

"Railtrack Network Plan and the Far North Lion"

followed by questions.

Speaker:

Frank Roach, North Highland Railway Development Officer.

"My Rôle and Achievements in 1998"

followed by questions.

Tea and biscuits at 4.15pm

Business meeting at 4.45pm

Presidential Address:

Robert MacLennan MP, Caithness, Sutherland and East Ross

Chairman's Report: John Melling

Treasurer's Report: Keith Harman

Election of Office Bearers and two committee members.

Close of meeting at 6.00pm

Notes:

This year's meeting has been arranged so that members from the North can be met by car at Tain at 1455 and returned to the station for northbound departure at 1815. If you wish to use this facility please contact the Honorary Secretary.

Also, please think of who you would like to serve on the Committee and make nominations prior to the meeting.

20.9.98

Keith Tyler, Honorary Secretary

Committee Matters

Report of the Committee meetings held on Saturday 6th June 1998 at Fortrose, and 5th September at Kinbrace.

The membership has increased to 179. There is still a number of former members who have failed to renew their membership. The committee members are following up on lapsed members. The membership list has been computerised to improve the use of the data.

Community Councils will be targeted. As representatives of their local communities it will be beneficial to our cause to have the opportunity of keeping them informed. A membership card, the size of a credit card is to be produced. The final design will be considered at the next meeting.

The committee expressed satisfaction at the success of the Dingwall Commuter Train and the possibility of re-opening of the downside platform at Beaulieu.

Extract from a letter from R J Bown FOFNL member from Helmsdale

1.8.98

Missed Opportunity

Dear Sir,

I noted with interest, in the June newsletter that you would like comments from the members.

First I was shocked to read that the committee had no faith in the "Dornoch Bridge Crossing" surely the most wasted opportunity in the north for decades. My second point is poor connections by ScotRail, it is only possible to use the Kyle line from the north for part of the summer season. Since the last train originates from

Disappointment was expressed at the omission by ScotRail of this train from the Summer edition of the pocket timetable.

John Melling reported on the Highland Rail Partnership meeting he attended on 5th April. Freight traffic on the line needs watching. There had been some fish meal traffic from Invergordon to Kyle. The committee expressed concern at the delay in the development of a freight terminal in Caithness.

John Melling has been elected Chairman of the new Highland Railway Heritage company.

Discussion took place on the design of the Publicity leaflet and it was left to Roger Piercy to work up the new ideas.

John Moore tabled his report on his investigation of cycle hire options along the Line.

Aberdeen surely it would be possible for the Kyle and the north train to run together from Inverness to Dingwall. I appreciate this would mean the north train would leave 45 minutes later. My suggestion would make it possible for people from the north to travel to Aberdeen and back in one day which would also benefit oil workers returning from Aberdeen to the north.

On a brighter note I am glad to note the proposed reopening of Beaulieu Station, this I hope is only the start.

I hope you find my suggestions helpful and I look forward to hearing any comments.

Yours faithfully

R J Bown

A Day of Contrasts

Recently I went by rail to Edinburgh for the first time for a long while. It turned out to be a day of contrasts. For a start the sight of a six coach train was surprising but I soon realised the need for this was brought about by the heavy demand for booked seats with family groups heading off on the first day of the school holidays. The contrast was on the journey home when there were just two coaches.

I am not a very good at reading during a train journey, soon getting quite queasy, so resort to watching the scenery go by. Here the contrast is with the lack of real and safe opportunities when driving. It is marvellous scenery through which to be conducted and makes a comparison with the urban areas.

In case I did get the opportunity to read I bought myself a rail magazine. After a spell of window gazing I had found myself with another contrast. I had been musing about the advantages of having very few opening windows on the train and how it reduces the opportunity to throw litter out. Imagine my surprise to discover an article putting forward the view as to how some of our linesides are so disgraceful. It was nice to see that our lines are so clean.

The last contrast of the day was to witness a bike in transit. Having published some articles on the subject of carrying bikes I thought it was all straightforward. How naïve! The bike in our compartment wouldn't fit properly anywhere, even in the space provided for a wheelchair and every time the trolley came through the door we were treated to quite a performance.

Enjoy this issue. Thank you for your correspondence and to the member in Orkney who is under the impression I am American, I'm an ex-Londoner who can't use his American based spell checker properly!

Roger Piercy

Sunday Service - Please

For just three months of the year Ross-shire, Sutherland and Caithness have Sunday trains. On a September Sunday the afternoon train from Inverness left Helmsdale carrying 33 passengers and arrived into Thurso at 20.20 with 29 on board. Some of these are students at the Technical College who, although preferring rail travel, have to go by bus in the winter.

The absence of a Sunday service most of the year inhibits longer distance weekend travel for locals, Orcadians, oilmen and visitors. FOFNL advocates a southbound Sunday train arriving in Inverness at 1800 giving an onward connection to Aberdeen, Central Scotland, with the option of the Sleeper south also available.

To compliment this service we wish to see a 1830 northbound Inverness - Wick train. This would give connections from beyond back to Ross, Sutherland and Caithness. Many younger people like to have the weekend away returning back to work on Sunday evening.

What do you think?

John Melling

Cycling Matters

Extract from a letter from Mary and Dick Langridge, FOFNL members from Inverness

22.8.98

Dear Sir,

We recently enjoyed our first cycle ride from Plockton to Garve for some eight years. It was a warm, sunny day with a helpful westerly wind while at home in Inverness it had remained dull most of the day. We even had to seek out shade at picnic time.

Why were we able to do this? Because we could take our cycles on the trains with us at no extra expense. Our pocket was lightened to the tune of £38.20 yet we look forward to more of the jaunts we used to enjoy and, at the same time, happily contributing more to ScotRail's coffers again.

Thank you to everyone who took up the matter with the railways and thank you to ScotRail for (eventually) listening and reacting positively.

Yours sincerely

Mary and Dick Langridge

Railway Cuttings

Ross-shire Journal 21/8/98

Stations on the right track for a revamp

Three Ross-shire stations are to receive a revamp following an announcement by Railtrack of a £1.5 million upgrade package in the north. Achnasheen, Dingwall and Tain are all in line for a spruce-up which will include repairs to station buildings internally and externally, resurfacing platforms, weather proofing and upgrading shelters and structurally conserving footbridges.

Glass platform canopies will be maintained or replaced, along with other works. Work will start later this month and all stations will be completed by November.

At Dingwall a temporary footbridge will be installed and tread replacements and a non-slip coating will be applied to the permanent bridge.

However, Railtrack says passengers will not be disrupted in any way during these works. Railtrack Scotland director Janette Anderson said, "We hold a serious commitment to improving the infrastructure for Highland rail-users via our station regeneration plans, and our track and signalling programmes."

This week local Highland Councillor Margaret Paterson applauded the announcement. "It is wonderful news," she said. "I am having a meeting with Railtrack representatives on Thursday morning to determine what is going to be done at Dingwall. This will give us a feeling of security about our station and, with The Mallard opening there soon, it will really be the hub of that part of the town."

ScotRail Press Release

ScotRail still tops for performance

ScotRail is still running the most punctual trains in Britain according to figures published yesterday by the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising. By continuing to surpass Passenger Charter standards and demonstrate sustained improvement across its whole spectrum of services the company is again bucking an overall industry performance described by OPRAF director John O'Brien as giving "...cause for concern." ScotRail stands alone in showing improvement in punctuality and reliability in all five of its main service groupings, with figures well into the 90's in percentage terms.

"It helps that ScotRail and Railtrack also enjoy a superb working relationship. We share similar

boundaries and an integrated train control centre in Glasgow and that greatly assists us in taking joint action to reduce delay," said Deputy Managing Director Alex Lynch.

During the twelve months ended June 27th 1998:

96.4% of ScotRail Highland services arrived within ten minutes of schedule - 0.4% up on 96/97 and 4.4% above Charter Standard target revised upwards in September.

But although they're pleased that the latest figures continue to show an upward trend, ScotRail officials refuse to get carried away., "There can be no backslapping while there are still trains running late or trains being cancelled," says Alex Lynch.

Scotsman - June

Rhyming on the rails

Poetry was the order of the day in a train on the Far North line yesterday as part of the Highland Festival. Writers from all over the Highlands have joined trains on four North and West railway lines and read a selection of poetry to passengers.

Moir Forsyth, boarded the train in her home town yesterday to go to Helmsdale in Caithness. "It's a good idea and people seem to enjoy it - holiday-makers especially," she said. "I'm used to reciting in hotels and other meeting places but I've never done it in trains before." She was joined on the train at Alness by Janet Macinnes, who helped to organise the project. Mrs. Macinnes said after the journey: "It was wonderful - it was nice to bring poetry to a wider audience. "You don't know what to expect at all as many people were scunnered by poetry at school and think it's not for them, but this makes it more accessible."

PASSENGER SERVICES FOR EASTER ROSS - FOFNL PROPOSALS

The years since Dr. Beeching's plan have seen a 30% rise in the population around the Inner Moray Firth. Whilst the Highlands had successfully fought off major railway closure by the early 1970s. the resulting pattern of train service north of Inverness has seen little permanent change over the last 25 years.

The basic weekday train service is three trains in each direction. The only permanent change has been the withdrawal of the Sunday morning train from Inverness to Lairg and back. In the 1980s there was a short experiment with a commuter train from Invergordon to Inverness. A fourth summer-only end-to-end train was tried for two seasons in the early 1990's. Neither initiative was sustained.

The success of the Dingwall - Inverness commuter train introduced earlier this year

encourages a fresh look. The growth in population in mid Ross over this last decade has brought increased commuting into the regional centre at Inverness. There are also those who commute from Inverness to Dingwall also. Further north in Easter Ross the combined population of Alness and Invergordon of 12,000 and the catchment areas of Fearn and Tain stations of 9,000 remain to be tapped. The bridge over the Kyles of Sutherland accesses a further area around Dornoch. On the one hand the modernised A9 is a serious challenge to a rail passenger service, whilst on the other a service of three trains in each direction cannot be an attraction. The way ahead is to identify particular parts of the market which rail can hope to capture, and then to build on these.

FOFNL has five proposals:-

1. start the morning Dingwall - Inverness commuter train from Tain
2. a mid afternoon Inverness - Tain service

3. a later afternoon return Tain - Inverness service
4. a later evening Inverness - Tain service
5. dedicated bus connections to/from Dornoch

ScotRail are to be encouraged in their pursuance of the first of these objectives, an extension of the morning commuter train to start back from Tain. Its introduction would be enhanced by a swift limited stop onward connection to Edinburgh leaving Inverness at or before 09.00.

The case for each of the remaining proposals is examined for its potential to attract both local and longer distance travel.

At present there is a six hour gap in northward departures from Inverness between 11.05 and 17.15 Thurso/Wick departures. Inevitably there is no connectual facility from either Central Scotland or Aberdeen over this length of the day. Likewise there is no facility for travel to and from Moray Firth towns to the east of Inverness. A service out of Inverness at around 15.20 to Tain could attract:-

- returning shoppers from Inverness and Dingwall
- connecting passengers from central Scotland and ideally Aberdeen
- after-school travel in Mid and Easter Ross

A returning service from Tain at around 16.30 would break into a gap in southbound services offering:-

- after school/work travel in Easter and Mid Ross
- commuter and leisure travel to Inverness
- onward connections with more

acceptable arrival times at Aberdeen and Central Scotland

Lastly the proposal for a late Monday - Saturday Inverness - Tain train at around 20.20 would provide:-

- connections off the 12.00 from Kings Cross via Edinburgh, the busiest train into Inverness arriving at 20.06
- later connection from Aberdeen, enabling travel from that city after the end of a working day
- later optional travel facility for those returning from Inverness

These proposals envisage 5 trains each weekday in each direction between Tain and Inverness. A more frequent service produces wider travel options including:- more flexible part day trips between the towns on the line same day out and back travel to the major cities later return from Inverness.

Improvements attract custom. Given the commitment of the Highland Railway Network Partnership to Integrated Public Transport and the opportunities arising from the government's Rural Transport initiative, the provision of a bus link between Dornoch and Tain stations should follow.

This article deliberately takes a broad approach - it avoids discussing exact timings, the positioning of trains, or the use of particular passing loops. By its very nature railway infrastructure is less flexible than road transport. The challenge of identifying opportunities and applying flexibility to attract traffic becomes the greater.

This section of railway passes through the most populated part of the Highlands - let's optimise its use.

John Melling - Chairman FOFNL

Did you ever want to become an Engine Driver?

At the end of the last century it must have been every boy's ambition to become an engine driver. Few of them did. Have you thought it was because there was a limit to the number of jobs available? Having been lent the book "Locomotive Engine Driving", written by one Michael Reynolds, formerly Locomotive Inspector, London Brighton and South Coast Railway I think there may have been other reasons.

After a moralising introduction, in the style of Samuel Smiles, Michael Reynolds sets out his basic syllabus for the lower rank of Third Class driver under nearly 50 topics. Apart from being able to read rules and to write down 12 taken from the section "Engine Drivers and Fireman", he also has to be able to answer questions on the observance of signals and a host of other topics. For example, he has to generally describe the locomotive engines with either inside cylinders, or outside cylinders, double frame or single frame, and to give an explanation of lap and lead pointing out their advantages. He has to explain the use of the lead plug and the effects of expansion on the boiler. He has to explain why it is necessary to know the number of vehicles in the train before starting, and to know why 140lbs steam is better than 120lbs steam. He needs to show how a film of oil is capable of preventing two metal parts from coming into contact with each other. He also needs to understand that 4 drops of oil per minute will keep a big end cool, and the precautions that are necessary to surmount any slight breakdown - spanners, packing etc. He must also state what must be done in the case of the regulator losing all control over

the steam to the cylinders, other than applying the brake. If he got through these, and many more he had the prospect of taking an examination for Second Class and rising to a First Class Driver's certificate.

However before he could qualify for Third Class he had to satisfy the Locomotive Inspector that he could do arithmetic e.g. If 4lbs of tallow cost 20 pence, what will 16lbs cost? Simplicity itself, according to the author. All you had to do is:

In this question there are two things mentioned, tallow and money; the answer required is the price, money. Put down the money - 20 pence - for the third term. This is always so, that is, the third term is of the same kind as the answer required, and is worth remembering. If the answer is to be greater than the third term the greater is placed second and if it is to be less it is placed first and the less, of course, second. The question before us requires an answer greater than the third term and is worked out thus -

4lbs : 16lbs :: 20 pence

$$\begin{array}{r} 20 \\ 4 \overline{)320} \end{array}$$

80 pence = 6s 8d Ans

So now we might just know why so few people ever became engine drivers! On the other hand, perhaps it explains why Mr. Reynolds was former Locomotive Inspector.

Submitted by members Pam and Laurie Draper, Culbokie. "Locomotive Engine Driving", Michael Reynolds; first published in 1877 by Crosby, Lockwood & Son 7, Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London.

RAILTRACK CONSULTATION

Following publication of the Railtrack Network Management Statement, in the jargon NMS, of which a Scottish version was usefully prepared to focus on our more specific concerns, - in which context one recalls the ever-relevant comment, "I believe in taking the Broad View - how does it Affect ME?"!!! - Railtrack held Consultative Sessions in Aberdeen and Glasgow. Their aim was to bring together the reactions of as many actively and potentially motivated organisations towards establishing a broad consensus. Thus fruitful partnerships could be developed to supporting viable rail improvements in response to anticipated public and commercial need.

The NMS is a moderately weighty document. The Scottish version has been generally well received. One criticism is that it is a bit thin on specific forecast improvements in the Highlands. Its timescale is not, shall we say, over impetuous. However, Railtrack has committed itself to greater transparency and accountability, so that future Statements of Intent are likely to be followed by further Consultations. They intend to listen, take on board what they can, whilst explaining why other matters cannot realistically proceed. I find this highly encouraging.

I was invited to participate on behalf of FoFNL, and was very glad to do so. While obviously the Society is not in a position to offer anything appreciable in the way of funding, we want to be aware of the discussions taking place and the resulting business plan packages that may enable Railtrack to move forward on a well researched basis.

It was also good to meet some of the people who will play key roles in

developing proposals. At the same time it is clear that voluntary groups like ours can usefully participate, not least by keeping our members informed and, through them, striving to canvas wider and effective public support. However in such matters sometimes there is a need to respect confidentiality. A delicately balanced negotiation can be put in jeopardy or even lost irretrievably by a careless remark. So we may sometimes seem a bit more reticent than necessary.

It will be obvious to anyone interested in rail development, both historical and contemporary, that in the nature of things railway investment almost always involves massive capital sums and an extended timescale. In my view, not unshared I venture to think, is largely why governments, with their 5-year vision and susceptibility to short term public reaction, have invariably proved unfit to offer consistent guidance. Maybe John Prescott will break the mould, but I would not advocate holding one's breath, though wishing him well.

My personal desire to see substantial track redoubling south of Inverness on the Highland mainline, and at least as far as Elgin on the Inverness-Aberdeen line, with the reopening of up of stations serving up to a dozen well-established communities is very unlikely. Think of them as beguiling star-twinkles! Station reopening can only be contemplated on a case by case thorough evaluation basis. Track reinstatement, with all the wiring, switching and signalling implications, is very expensive. Sadly this is an unlikely prospect in this sparsely populated area. It will need strong up-front support for regular interval services to secure the handful of passing loops that would facilitate this.

Further commuter facilities may be

reaching outline discussion stage. Two very different schemes have been raised, for which realistic cases need to be consolidated, Aviemore-Inverness and Stonehaven-Inverurie. However Railtrack cannot offer such developments as speculation, putting at risk more urgent priorities and the security of its shareholders. Serious Local Authority input and external funding would be needed.

Keith-Inverness and - our own prime goal - Tain-Inverness with a connecting coach link from and to Dornoch could be added. But these are as yet only my own forecasts.

Well yes, you are entitled to say, at last he has mentioned the Far North Line - which is what we are about! Entirely true. No question. My defence being that we have to view our more local concerns in their wider context. But there is more. On the Far North

Line some modest reduction in end-to-end timing is in early prospect with the new timetable. Further progressive reductions, without impinging on prudent recovery times that substantially guarantee on-time terminal arrivals, are possible but can only be achieved when funding packages can be assembled and committed to removing some of the more onerous crossing line-speed restrictions. This will happen only when those in a position to facilitate such works are sufficiently motivated.

Overall we are fortunate in that Railtrack only have to deal with two operating companies, ScotRail and EWS, in our part of Scotland, with both of whom they enjoy a mutually constructive relationship.

Aberdeen 21 August 1998

Keith Tyler

Facing Points

Earlier this evening Class 37 no. 37684 'Peak National Park' ran gently through Kinbrace resplendent in maroon livery, only modestly powering up for the 1:150 climb north. Somewhat later, after I had enjoyed 'My Fair Lady' yet again and France had won the World Cup, it returned south with two loaded wagons. The good news is that this was a profitable train, our passenger services depend on subsidy; only charters pay their full costs. The bad news is that such freight workings are often so short for the power available, and there are not nearly enough of them.

Yet there is a good deal of highly pro-active negotiation going on. It takes time. In the interim it can be frustrating. Earlier this summer Railtrack lowered the track in Killiekrankie tunnel to give 8'6" containers

direct access to Inverness; for some months no freight took advantage of this. But it will come. It will develop. Our local pick-up freights deliver directly into the Enterprise network, and as one goes south there is a vigorous increase in freight traffic. Goods are once again resuming their traditional role as the railway breadwinner.

Here in the north we are lucky. ScotRail regularly tops the charts for reliability, customer service and punctuality. Mind you, I have a sneaking suspicion of a clandestine Paddington inheritance on the latter, at least as far as our own line is concerned; the fine GWR reputation for early London arrivals was found to be based far less on spirited running than remarkably slack running schedules, making it quite hard for competent drivers not to arrive early! Of course reliable on-

time arrival is comforting and commendable. A good many of us have vital onward connections. And I know 'recovery time', prudently built in to the public timetable, has its place - but is it in part overdone? Southbound one usually stops at Tain for some 3 minutes, at Invergordon for much the same or longer, at Dingwall for much more than twice that (one is tempted to nip out for some shopping - is that the idea?!) and again at Muir of Ord. To my mind at least 12 minutes could readily be pruned from end-to-end timings without jeopardising an on-time Inverness arrival. The Wick/Thurso - Inverness time continues to be a perennial source of criticism.

The other day I was reflecting on the fact that early steam trains used to take well over 6½ hours. What World War 2 servicemen had made of it as the very last leg of a prolonged journey I shudder to think! Southerners, then as now, seem to think Inverness is about as far north as one can go.

To return to the present I begin to think a target of 200 minutes, it sounds better than 3hr.20mins., realistic. In the medium to longer term we could campaign for a fraction under 3 hours. That would involve a significant capital investment to ease linespeed restrictions. This in turn will depend on much greater use, leading to more trains and a persuasively credible business case.

What can we do in the immediate future? I mean it's all very well to be in a Society like ours, but what practical help can we give? Well obviously to use our trains as much as possible, and encourage our friends to do

the same or at least give it a try. They will say it's more expensive, ignoring the hidden add-on costs of motoring. They will say it takes longer. What do they do with the relatively short time they save by driving anyway? (See letter in Feb1999 Newsletter).. And a train is so much more relaxing than a car. Another thing we might try. The Heart of Wales Line Travel Association, HoWLTA for short, have groups who 'adopt' their local station, smartening it up, weeding, where suitable providing and stocking pamphlet racks to advertise local attractions and events, as well as getting pocket rail timetables into local shops. Would any members support similar action on our line?

Two important provisos. First, if you undertake something you must be prepared to do it regularly; few things look less appealing than an empty leaflet rack, or one with out-of-date or dishevelled material. Second, and even more important, any activity of this sort must be authorised and co-ordinated. Our stations are leased by ScotRail from Railtrack and we can only act with proper permission.

So if this idea takes off, and I for one certainly hope it may, please contact me, your Secretary 01431 831211, and I will mediate as co-ordinator with ScotRail. They may need to take on board such an idea, and understandably might want to monitor a modest pilot scheme first, but I think they may come to welcome such an initiative.

First things first. Let me hear from some of you, and we'll see if this is a runner.

Keith Tyler, Secretary