

FROM THE PAPERS

June 2010 NORTH WEALD VILLAGE LIFE – Work on restoring the station buildings at North Weald continues, although the most noticeable progress can be seen outside the station, with the laying of the passing loop, so that both platforms can be used. Additionally, two sidings are being installed alongside the loop. The LT Museum has lent the railway a 20-ton brake van, which will be used for the safe transit of goods wagons and to enable the test of the new unloading pad, which has been specifically constructed to enable the easier delivery of locomotives, etc.

03.06.10 THE TIMES – National Rail executives have entered a fresh row over bonuses after the Office of Rail Regulation questioned their commitment to safe working on the railway, doubted their claims of improvements and said that it was not yet certain whether the organisation was more efficient.

04.06.10 EVENING STANDARD – (1) London businesses today delivered a stern hands off warning on Crossrail, telling ministers they may withdraw funding if the rail scheme is spoiled by cutbacks. The move came after transport minister Theresa Villiers refused to give the Commons a cast-iron guarantee that there will not be cuts to stations or branch lines.

(2) Network Rail's chief executive Iain Coucher highlighted improvements to the Thameslink route, operated by the much-criticised First Capital Connect, as one possible area for budget cuts. There was confusion after the Department for Transport said the Thameslink north-south service was not included in its review of whether to press ahead with 1,300 new or refurbished train carriages for service across England and Wales.

(3) A serial mugger who repeatedly threatened to stab London Underground passengers has been jailed for five years. The BT Police arrested him after tracking him down using CCTV. He had convictions for 15 previous offences including robbery and possessing an offensive weapon. The court was told he had a history of mental illness.

05.06.10 THE TIMES – Network Rail boss Ian Coucher, who is paid more than four times as much as the Prime Minister, has said that he would refuse to take a pay cut and that he was worth every penny of his £613,000 salary.

06.06.10 SUNDAY TIMES – A Swiss man faces possible caning in Singapore for allegedly breaking into a railway depot and spray painting a carriage with graffiti. He was charged with one count of trespassing and two counts of vandalism. The crime also carries a possible fine of £1,000 or up to three years in jail.

09.06.10 THE TIMES – John Turner, in a letter to the Editor, writes that Germany has about 20,000km of electrified rail network, France about 15,000km, Italy and Spain each have about 12,000km – Britain has about 5,000km. Twenty-two European countries have a higher percentage of electrified lines than Britain. The insistence by network Rail boss Iain Coucher that he is worth every penny of his salary and that they want to bring in the best people to transform it into the best railway in the world indicates that he is living in cloud cuckoo land.

10.06.10 THE TIMES – Train operator First Group is reported to have hired Tim O'Toole, the former London Underground managing director, as chief operating officer and deputy chief executive.

11.06.10 EVENING STANDARD – (1) A letter to the Editor says that the long-drawn-out redevelopment of Victoria Underground station is a warning of what happens when an earlier Tory government built a new line on the cheap. We should be wary of talking about cutting Crossrail only to find stations that are full from day one, and a need for a massive disruption to expand what is by then a working railway.

(2) Mere mention of E. Nesbit's story is enough to send people of a certain age into teary raptures about Jennifer Agutter's knickerbockers in the 1970 film, *Railway Children*. Now the tale is being recreated with a real steam engine on a former Eurostar platform at Waterloo in a Yorkshire Railway Museum production. 4 July – 5 September. Railwaychildrenwaterloo.com

12.06.10 THE TIMES – Staff on the Docklands Light Railway are to strike over pay and working conditions, the RMT union said. DLR station staff will walk out for three days 23 June, coinciding with a strike by maintenance workers on the Jubilee, Northern and Piccadilly lines.

13.06.10 SUNDAY TIMES – Ministers have asked train companies for ideas to cut the cost of running the railways, and have told them they can keep half the savings. This is intended to give the companies an incentive to agree to changes in their contracts. Industry sources expect the Department for transport to back a trial of vertical integration, with trains and tracks being run by one company, as they were under British Rail. Merseyrail, in Liverpool, is tipped as the likely guinea pig,

16.06.10 EVENING STANDARD – Transport for London is to make all its data freely available to encourage the development of hundreds of new internet sites and mobile phone apps to help commuters. The information includes station locations and planned Underground works and will soon have bus route and stop data, as well as information for the new bicycle hire scheme.

THE TIMES – Crossrail's £15.9 billion budget is under review Philip Hammond, the Transport Secretary, has said. He said ministers remained committed to provide £5.1 billion, despite severe cuts to the transport budget, and that they wanted to see the project built in full.

17.06.10 EVENING STANDARD – Network Rail chief executive Iain Coucher is to quit after coming under government pressure to turn down a possible £600,000 bonus. He was also told by the new Tory Transport Secretary to trim £5.3 billion from its spending over the next five years. NR today insisted that Mr. Coucher's departure was for personal reasons but RMT union leader Bob Crow said he had presided over a culture that had attacked jobs, working conditions and safety while his salary and perks had gone through the roof. Mr. Coucher, 48, earns £613,000 a year and is believed to be Britain's best-paid public sector worker. He will remain in post until a successor is found.

NEW CIVIL ENGINEER – Blackfriars railway bridge is being completely refurbished as a key £350 million component of the £5.5bn Thameslink programme. The existing five-span bridge comprises a wrought iron deck supported by spandrels rising from longitudinal rib arches springing between piers in the river. Refurbishment involves strengthening everything from the rib arches down and replacing everything from the spandrels up. This must be done while maintaining an operational railway throughout the project, save for a handful of three-day possessions. In addition extra rib arches are being installed, some of them supported on previously redundant piers alongside the existing structure, in order to widen the crossing to suit the planned increase in capacity. Altogether there are 12 cranes on site.

Along with the restoration of the bridge a brand new Network Rail/London Underground joint ticket hall is being built on the north bank above the existing but temporarily closed District Line station. This is currently sheltered beneath a track protection shield which was built ahead of the demolition of the original mainline station. The shield consists of 39 steel plates weighing up to 7.4t which were delivered to a site next door but one and then lifted by crane over the intervening five-storey office block and then lowered into the Underground station via an existing vent. They were then positioned vertically on either platform to support other sections running horizontally above the track. Pre-installed spreading beams on the existing platforms were used as tracks and the protection units winched along them. Once in position the units were bolted together. The shield covers the length of the Underground station, which is closed until late 2011.

18.06.10 EVENING STANDARD – (1) As Transport for London struggles to balance its finances, officials told the London Assembly's budget committee that commuters might have to foot the bill for higher running costs and the need to maintain investment. They confirmed they are working on the basis that fare rises would be set at two per cent above the Retail Prices Index rate of inflation. With the RPI currently at 5.1 per cent and not expected to fall substantially until July – the relevant month for calculating new fares – that would mean an increase of about seven per cent. The final decision will be taken by Boris Johnson in September or October.

(2) A pensioner dubbed the Mole Man because of his habitual tunnelling has died, leaving a £350,000 unpaid council bill. William Lyttle was ordered to pay the sum after Hackney council evicted him when he almost caused his 20-room detached home to collapse by digging a network

of passages underneath it. The retired civil engineer had spent 40 years digging 60 feet of tunnels before a nearby pavement collapsed, sparking the council investigation. Mr. Lyttle, 79, was ordered to pay more than £350,000 to the council after a high Court ruling in 2008. After being evicted from his home he was put up in a hotel for 11 months, at a cost to the taxpayer of £45,000, he was then re-housed in a nearby flat. After his recent death from natural causes it was revealed that that he had knocked tunnel shaped holes in the walls between rooms in his top-floor apartment.

19.06.10 THE TIMES – (1) Andrew Adonis, Secretary of State for Transport 2009-2010, writes that rail improvements can't be shunted into a siding. There are more passengers on trains – and mostly modern trains – than at any time since 1946. Punctuality is better. But improvement is patchy. Network Rail is an inefficient monopoly utility, and there is no justification for its executives to receive bonuses. Further electrification is a key requirement for the long-term, green development of the railways. Wales has the distinction of being the only European nation besides Albania without a single mile of electrified railway.

(2) Obituary: Ted Martin. After a career in the motor industry in which he had several notable motor racing engines and car designs to his credit, Ted Martin retired in the 1970s to devote himself to building one of the country's most remarkable miniature railways. His Garden and Woodland Railway, a 7¼ inch gauge railway, came to occupy a hectare of land surrounding his Oxfordshire home.

22.06.10 THE TIMES – The Government put Britain's first high-speed railway up for auction yesterday, in advance of an expected announcement in the Budget today that state assets worth billions will be sold or leased to the private sector. Philip Hammond, the Transport Secretary, said that the sale of rights operate the line linking St. Pancras to the Channel Tunnel would spur the crucial task of reducing the public sector debt. The auction, which should be completed by April, is expected to raise between £1.5 billion and £2 billion. The high-speed line cost £6 billion to build and on completion the Government bought out the consortium that built it and its £4 billion of debt. Eurotunnel has made no secret of its desire to acquire High Speed One, which would enable it to increase traffic by encouraging new operators to compete against Eurostar and build new freight business.

25.06.10 THE TIMES – (1) The 48-hour strike on London Underground by maintenance workers continues today until 19.00.

(2) Nearly £700 million set aside for a third runway at Heathrow could be diverted towards speeding up construction of a direct rail connection to Waterloo. Other measures that could be freed up from the Government's decision to shelve the controversial runway include building a new transit system linking all the airport's terminals, and the construction of a new super-Terminal 2 with the closure of Terminal 1.

27.06.10 SUNDAY TIMES – The leaders of several of Britain's biggest unions, which are threatening to lead strikes against pay freezes, have received 10 per cent pay rises and an array of perks for themselves. Newly released union accounts reveal that several now have packages that exceed the £142,500 salary of the prime minister. Bob Crow, RMT general secretary, saw his overall package rise by almost £10,000 to £155,034 in 2009.

28.06.10 THE TIMES – The Mayor of London has taken full control of Tube Lines after buying out the company's shareholders for £310 million. The move brings to an end a Public Private Partnership that was supposed to last for 30 years.

29.06.10 METRO – For more than 30 years, the D&AD Student Awards has identified top talent for the advertising and design industry. This week Behind the Idea features nominated entries from Metro's brief to create a poster campaign promoting the newspaper to busy commuters.

30.06.10 THE TIMES – National Express may run East Anglia and c2c until 2012, after the Government launched a rail franchising review. The company had expected to hand back the two franchises next year, after the last Government exercised a break clause partly as a penalty for problems with its East Coast operation.