



THE BRUNDALL & BRAYDESTON CHRONICLE

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A goods steam train, T26 class No.490, is met at Brundall Station by stationmaster William Miles and staff c.1915

A SPECIAL EDITION to CELEBRATE
175 Years of the Yarmouth to Norwich Railway
1844-2019
NORFOLK'S FIRST RAILWAY



www.brundallvillagehistory.org.uk

EVENTS TO CELEBRATE 175TH ANNIVERSARY

The very first railway to open in Norfolk celebrates its 175th Anniversary this year!



First opened in 1844, the Railway connecting the City of Norwich with the coast at Great Yarmouth is now part of the Greater Anglia operated Wherry Lines.

The Wherry Lines Community Rail Partnership has joined with community groups and station volunteers along the route to host this programme of events and activities:

175 years Young: An exhibition of the past, present and future of the Norwich to Great Yarmouth railway.

Organised by the East Norfolk Transport Users' Association (www.entua.org.uk). The show will tour towns and villages along the route :

Great Yarmouth Library: 29 April-12 May
Gorleston Library: 20 May-1 June
Brundall Co-Op & Post Office: 3-15 June
Reedham Community Centre: 18-23 June
Reedham Station Heritage Room: 24-30 June

The 'Blue' Co-Op in Brundall will also host a **Family Event** on Saturday 8 June, 10.00am-Noon.

Free Guided Walk on Sunday 5 May at 11.15.

Starting from Buckenham Station (connecting out of 10.58 from Norwich and 09.46 from Lowestoft) this will be led by Trevor Garrod. The 5 mile walk will follow paths and tracks past the church and over the ridge to Strumpshaw village. Then via quiet roads, past Strumpshaw Hall to Strumpshaw Fen RSPB reserve ending with a stroll along the lane to Buckenham station. For those preferring a slightly shorter walk, it is possible to go from the centre of Strumpshaw to Lingwood Station.

Visit: <https://wherrylines.com/days-out/>

Model Railway Exhibition at Cantley Station, Saturday 4 May 10.00am-2.00pm.

Hosted by the adopter team, refreshments will be served and there will be an opportunity to view and hear more about the station's award winning gardens.

Tea Party at Reedham Station, 11 May, 2.00-4.00pm.

The Heritage Room at Reedham Station will be open to visitors from 24-30 June.

Talk: 175 Years Young by Trevor Garrod, Chairman of the East Suffolk Travellers Association, Brundall Memorial Hall, Thursday 25th July 7.30pm. Hosted by Brundall Local History Group following its AGM. Free event. All welcome.

The Wherry Lines are currently undergoing a major £60M modernisation scheme by Network Rail. It includes replacing Victorian signalling with a computerised system.

At Brundall Junction tracks, crossings and switches are being re-modelled and renewed.

The platforms at Brundall Station are being lengthened by 50 metres to accommodate the new Stadler trains and an access ramp is being installed. Redundant signalling equipment will be donated to heritage projects.



Brundall Gardens station adopter Greg Chandler took this photograph of one of the new Swiss Stadler trains on its first test run on the line at 11.46pm on 16th January 2019.

© Greg Chandler

A Chronology of the Wherry Lines 1844-2019

1836: Royal Assent given on 4th July for the construction of the *Eastern Counties Railway* from London to Norwich via Colchester and Ipswich.

1837: Although work started in London it finally stopped at Colchester due to financial problems. .

1842: An alternative plan to link Norwich with Great Yarmouth was proposed by Robert Stephenson (Chairman) and George Stephenson (Engineer). The "Norfolk Railway" passed by Royal Assent on 18th June. The Act confirmed capital of £150,000 with a loan of £50,000 for engines, carriages and other equipment.

1843: Construction of a simple route via Brundall, Cantley and Reedham, undertaken by Messrs Grissel and Peto, started on 20th April at Postwick Hall Farm. The railway company gave in to the demands of Brundall residents to site the single track on the low ground along the Yare valley, where it was out of sight, rather than higher up alongside The Street, as first proposed. The only diversion from the River Yare was at Thorpe St Andrew where a cut was made across Whitlingham Marshes.

1844: The line was ceremonially opened with a gala day on 30th April. 200 guests travelled to Yarmouth on the train in just over 55 minutes, taking only 44 minutes for the return journey to Norwich. They were entertained by Howlett's brass band who played in the open, seatless 3rd class carriage next to the engine. A celebratory dinner was held that evening at the Assembly Rooms in Norwich. On the next day, 1st May, 1,015 passengers paid their fares to sample the first railway in Norfolk. The weekday service offered four trains each way, the first leaving Norwich at 9.00am, the last at 7.00pm. The fares were 3s.6d. for 1st class, 2s.6d. for 2nd class and 1s.3d. for 3rd class. Cheap day returns were offered for 5s., 4s. and 2s.

1847: Samuel Morton Peto, who had purchased the Somerleyton Estate and the Norwich and Lowestoft Navigation Company, obtained permission to create a railway east of Reedham to Lowestoft. It was an opportunity to revive the fortunes of the Suffolk port and rival Yarmouth as an entry point for vessels heading upriver to Norwich. The single track opened to goods traffic on 3rd May and to passengers on 1st July. *Continued on page 4.*



BRUNDALL The Impact of the Railway

By 1836 about 240 people lived in the quiet rural parishes of Brundall and Braydeston. Before the railway, locals relied on horse power to pull carts and coaches; blacksmiths and wheelwrights were essential village trades.

In 1844 Brundall Station was built in Braydeston where most people lived. It also had the advantage of being close to a foot ferry landing stage at Coldham Hall which connected rail passengers from the south side of the river. Brundall began to change together with the industrial and commercial growth of Norwich as more business commuters moved out of the City to make Brundall their home.

By 1891 the two parishes had merged with a total of 347 inhabitants. This figure had almost doubled by 1921 due to new house building in the village.



Staff at Brundall Station c.1915

Left to right, back row: Arthur Wright (porter), Mr Groves, Mr F. Ranson, Bertie Brinded; front row: Mr Brigham (signalman), William Miles (station master) and Mr Reddit (chief porter).

During WW1 the railway carried wounded soldiers from the front via Norwich to Brundall Auxiliary War Hospital where local men and women volunteered as nurses and support workers. Trains took young Norfolk recruits far from home to fight in two world wars.

Local enterprises could reach markets across the country by rail freight. Amongst these were rose growers Henry Morse & Sons, Read's horticultural nurseries and Brooms boatyard which supplied equipment and spares.

Until the 1960s, by far the biggest employer in the area was the railway. An army of clerks, guards, signalmen, plate men and luggage porters were recruited to staff every station along the line and maintain the track.





Continued from Page 3

1848: The *Norfolk Railway* was leased to the *Eastern Counties Railway*.

1849: Brundall to Reedham section doubled.

1862: The *Norfolk Railway* and *Eastern Counties Railway* were absorbed into the *Great Eastern Railway* on its formation.

1874: Following the great train disaster of 17th April at Thorpe Gardens, modern semaphore signalling was introduced.

1875: With the opening of the first section of the Cromer branch in 1874, the Whitlingham to Brundall section of track was doubled. It was probably also a safety measure.

1879: Act of Parliament passed for a more direct line from a junction at Brundall to Yarmouth via Lingwood and Acle.


1883: The first stage from Yarmouth to Acle opened in March. The second stage from Brundall to Acle opened in June. The track was single with a passing loop at Acle.

1923: The *Great Eastern Railway* passed into the ownership of the *London & North Eastern Railway*.

1924: Brundall Gardens Halt opened on 1st August. In 1917 cinema impresario Frederic Holmes Cooper had acquired a 120-acre estate, including 76 acres of Brundall Gardens (laid out in the 1880s). Cooper made the destination so popular that by 1922 it was attracting some 60,000 summer visitors. As a result he persuaded the railway company to open a basic halt-type station here.

1948: With the nationalisation of the railways, on 1st January the line became part of the Eastern Region of British Railways. Improvements were made to the waiting Room at Brundall Station.

1956: The first diesel railcars were introduced. Steam trains phased out between 1959 and 1961.

1965: British Railways re-branded *British Rail* with its distinctive logo. 

1967: Booking offices were closed at all stations between Norwich and Yarmouth, including Brundall. On-train conductors were equipped with portable ticket machines. The railway cottages on the platform at Brundall, where station staff had lived since the early days of the line, were demolished around this time. Other adjacent buildings were sold into private hands.

1973: The Norwich to Yarmouth and Lowestoft lines were re-named *The Wherry Lines*.



1994: With the start of privatisation, *Railtrack* took control of the railway infrastructure i.e. track, signalling, tunnels, bridges and level crossings.

1997: *British Rail* was privatised and train services became part of the *Anglia Railways* franchise.

2002: Most of *Railtrack's* operations transferred to the state-controlled non-profit company *Network Rail*.

2004: The train service franchise was taken over by *One Railway* followed by *National Express East Anglia* in 2008 and *Abellio Greater Anglia* in 2012.

2016: *Abellio* was awarded the next East Anglia franchise to run train services up to 2025. The service was branded *Greater Anglia*.

2019: *Network Rail* commences £60m scheme to upgrade and modernise the Wherry Lines. *Greater Anglia* is set to begin introducing its brand-new fleet of three and four car bi-mode trains from later this year (see page 2).



Panel Laying at Brundall Station 2019 © Network Rail

Further reading:

Brundall Local History Group: *The Book of Brundall & Braydeston* (Halsgrove, 2007)

Adderson, R & Kenworthy, G: *Branch Lines East of Norwich: The Wherry Lines* (Middleton Press, 2012)

Ayers, B & Hodgson, C: *Brundall Past & Present in Photographs* (BLHG, 2017)

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