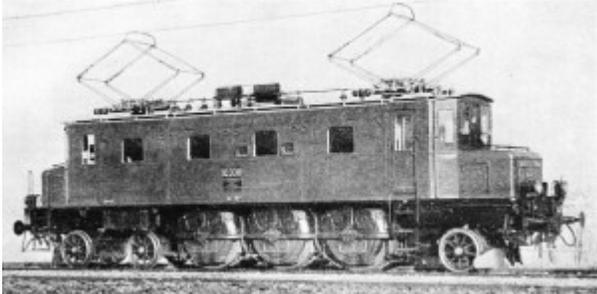


One thing we have learnt this week – railway electrification

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There was an [article](#) this week in the Guardian on the re-

purposing of "Pacer" Trains. A government minister has suggested converting them into village community halls amongst other uses. For any readers who are not familiar with these trains I'll briefly describe them. In the last gasp of British Rail some bright spark (or sparks) came up with a way of building trains on the cheap. Money was short and the design basically involved attaching a bus body topsides to a train chassis undersides. The result might have been alright in the 80's or early 90's but is now as the above article makes plain very out of date. I've only been on one in recent times last year when I was visiting a friend near Leeds. It was OK for a short journey once (the same return journey was not a Pacer train) but I wouldn't like to use it everyday. The whole point of the article is a legitimate grump about train services in the North of England which are very poor. This is all tied up in railway electrification. Some railway electrification has been carried out in the region but its been fairly piecemeal and as the article states getting from one side of the North of England can take a considerable amount of time. Failing Gray the Secretary of state for transport is said to have scrapped some of the East- West electrification meaning you won't be able to use electric trains on the entire East-West route. This is denied by network rail. Whether High Speed three is really required or whether a concerted electrification of the route East West plus other improvements is enough is a moot point. But something needs to be done and these old trains which don't meet a lot of rules and laws such as disability access need to be scrapped. By all means turn them into a village hall but do so fast. Neil PS Next time I'll have a look at the history of railway electrification. Its early history is quite revealing.

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