

## REGIONAL REVIEW

### CORONAVIRUS

**Southeastern** reduced its services in February. Various main line peak trains were cancelled from 8 February. Off-peak alterations from the same date comprised:

- Stopping trains between Victoria and Gillingham were extended all stations to Dover, instead of the usual Dover service.
- No trains via Maidstone East continued to Canterbury, except a few to suit school travel.
- The Sheerness branch and Strood to Maidstone West reverted to an hourly service.
- Hayes was served only by half-hourly trains to Cannon Street.

The Bromley North branch train ran half-hourly, instead of every twenty minutes, though any economy resulting from that must have been very small. The train and driver just had a longer turn round at each end. It had been planned to cancel services between Charing Cross and Tunbridge Wells from 8 February, but the line had been closed since 1 February by a land slip at High Brooms.

Further changes came on 22 February, with the following services being cut back to hourly:

- Charing Cross and Sevenoaks stopping
- Ashford via Tonbridge (continuing via Dover)
- Ashford via Maidstone East

Trains via Maidstone East continued to Ramsgate via Canterbury West, in place of trains from Charing Cross. The hourly Medway Valley trains were extended from Paddock Wood to Tonbridge. Off-peak trains between Charing Cross and Dartford via Blackheath and Woolwich were cancelled. The Hastings line had an hourly service, and there were no trains terminating and starting at Tunbridge Wells off-peak.

**Southern** and **Thameslink** introduced further timetable changes on 22 February. Reduced services operated off-peak thus:

- Uckfield service two-hourly
- Victoria to East Grinstead and Brighton to Hastings and Ore hourly
- Newhaven Town to Seaford

The shuttle between Brighton and Hove did not operate after 07:30.

A few Southern main line peak trains were withdrawn, including the through services between Seaford and London. There were no peak trains between London Bridge and Dorking, and fewer to Epsom. The London Bridge to Beckenham Junction service, which had been operating only on Saturdays, was reinstated to six days a week, but with trains every 90 minutes. With fewer trains needed, class 377 took over some class 313 diagrams.

Thameslink services to and from East Grinstead and Littlehampton were withdrawn. Trains between Horsham and Peterborough, which had been cut back to hourly, reverted to half-hourly.

With the Government making lateral flow test kits available to employers for staff who cannot work from home, GTR set up test centres at Hornsey depot, in their Croydon offices and at Brighton station. The Brighton facility is located in unit 313207, suitably adapted with curtains and screens, which is stabled in platform 8.

**Eurostar** has been obliged to mortgage its class 374 trains and two refurbished class 373 ones to Crédit Agricole in order to guarantee loans it has had to take on, because of lack of income. Most Eurostar staff have been furloughed. The

company has been in discussions with the UK and French governments about its future, as it expects to run out of cash around the end of May. Eurostar continues to run just one return trip from London to Amsterdam and to Paris each day.

## STOCK NOTES

**Classes 319 and 769:** Rail Operations Group intends to operate ten class 769 bimode units, with nine class 319. Units are adapted for parcels carrying at Eastleigh Works, with bimode conversions undertaken by Brush at Loughborough. Orion's bimode units are to be numbered from 769501, apparently not retaining the last two digits from the class 319 unit number. Orion plans to commence operations in April, with a service between the West Midlands and Scotland. The second class 769 conversion for Great Western, 769943, was delivered from Burton-on-Trent to Reading on 11 March. Great Western expects to introduce class 769 trains on the Reading to Basingstoke service during the course of the May 2021 timetable. There is no indication when class 769 will start working between Reading and Gatwick.

**Classes 375 and 377:** Southern's first refurbished unit, 377430, returned to traffic on 5 February. Upgrades comprise LED lighting, USB and power points, live information screens, passenger-counting equipment and on-board performance monitoring and fault diagnosis systems. It is the same seats, unfortunately. Southeastern plans to install LED lighting on its class 375 and 377 units and USB power points on class 375.

**Class 387:** Six Gatwick Express units are to transfer to Great Northern, together with six from c2c, enabling the remaining class 365 units to be taken out of service. The units may return to Gatwick Express later.

**Class 395:** Overhaul of the fleet starts this year. It will include fitting regenerative braking for use on AC lines and energy metering. Passengers may notice new seat covers and seat foam.

**Class 442:** Further moves have been:

8 Feb: 442408 Wolverton to Bournemouth; 442406 Bournemouth to Eastleigh  
9 Feb: 442406 Eastleigh to Wolverton  
23 Feb: 442403 Wolverton to Bournemouth  
5 March: 442404 Wolverton to Bournemouth; 442423 Bournemouth to Wolverton

Units fitted with AC motors are: 442402-04/08/11/13-16/18/19/22. Still to be done or with work under way are: 442406/09/10/17/20/23. Units being scrapped at Eastleigh are: 442401/05/07/12/21/24. The contractor started by cutting up all the motor coaches.

**Class 465:** Southeastern plans that class 707 will replace some Networkers. It is likely that class 465/2 will be first to go, because classes 465/0 and 465/1 were refitted with modern traction equipment from Hitachi.

**Class 484:** Covid restrictions have delayed conversion and delivery of trains, and infrastructure work on the Isle of Wight. The trains are not expected to enter service on the re-opened line until the middle of May, about six weeks later than first planned. Units 484002 to 484005 are to be tested between Eastleigh and Fareham before being taken by road to the Isle of Wight. It is not possible for them to run on the island while the railway is being upgraded. Island Line drivers are to carry out the testing, so needed to learn the route between Eastleigh and Fareham. Locomotives 20007 and 20142 were hired for this purpose and ran from Kings Norton to Eastleigh Depot on 4 February. Route learning operated on 9 to 11 February, with trips from Eastleigh scheduled at 09:14, 10:15, 11:14, 13:14 and 14:14, though not all ran. Locomotive 20007 is noteworthy for being the oldest diesel registered to work on the national network; it entered service at Devons Road, Bow in September 1957. Further deliveries, by road to Eastleigh East Yard, were 484002 on 23 February, 484003 on 1 March and 484004 on 3 March. They were moved to Eastleigh Depot by the 20s. The London Underground numbers of vehicles used in class 484 were:

131 = 7086	132 = 7068	133 = 7051	134 = 7074	135 = 7124
231 = 7011	232 = 7002	233 = 7083	234 = 7111	235 = 7093

**Class 700:** Despite having run over one million unit miles and for almost five years, class 700 is still failing to achieve 20,000 miles per technical incident.

**Class 701:** Unit 701025 was delivered from Derby to Eastleigh on 17 March.

## **TIMETABLES and DIAGRAMS**

**Maidstone:** There have been reports that a revised Maidstone East service is under consideration by the Department for Transport. Rather than having a Thameslink service to Cambridge, fast via Chislehurst, trains would run via Catford to Blackfriars.

**Freight:** Additional trains between Morris Cowley and Southampton, conveying BMW Minis for export, started running in February. Most car exports go through Eastern Docks, but provision of a new car handling facility at Western Docks enables this extra traffic to be handled. The trains concerned previously operated to Purfleet.

## **INTERESTING WORKINGS**

**Class 20:** Locomotives 20118+20132 hauled a tamper from West Ealing to East Grinstead, for trials on the Bluebell Railway, during the evening of 22 March. They returned the tamper to West Ealing during the night early on 24 February, running via East Croydon (reverse), Redhill, Tonbridge (reverse) and Catford.

**Class 43:** HST power cars 43423/68/67 and 43308 were hauled from Ely to Eastleigh Works by 60046 during the morning on 3 March. These were followed later in the day by 43296 and 43465/80/84 hauled by 60028. On 5 March 60046 hauled power cars 43296, 43308 and 43423/67 from Eastleigh to Willesden Depot.

**Class 69:** GBRf is having sixteen class 56 locomotives rebuilt with General Motors equipment, similar to class 66. They are to be painted at Eastleigh Works and the first to be hauled there was 69002 on 15 March.

**Class 156:** Unit 156496 ran from Heaton to Eastleigh via Oxford on 31 January. It had previously been to Eastleigh for overhaul, but returned for modifications. It returned to Heaton, with 156447, on 8 February.

**Class 313:** Network Rail unit 313121 was scheduled to run from Ferme Park to Eastleigh on 23 February, but it failed at Kensington Olympia. Next day 313202 ran empty 04:08 Brighton to Kensington in order to haul it to Lovers Walk. However, the return trip terminated at Three Bridges about 07:30, because of a points failure at Balcombe Tunnel Junction. Arrangements were then made for 313202 to haul 313121 to Eastleigh Works via Pulborough, arriving at 11:08. 313202 later returned to Lovers Walk from Eastleigh.

**Class 375:** Unit 375805 made two round trips from Herne Hill to Waterloo via the Linford Street curve during the early afternoon on 20 March, thought to be for route learning.

**Networkers:** Over-running engineering work prevented trains leaving Grosvenor Carriage Shed on time on Sunday 7 February. Units 465247+466015 had to be used on the 07:25 Victoria to Ashford via Maidstone East.

**Carriages:** A rake of seven HST carriages for Locomotive Services was hauled from Crewe to Eastleigh Works by 47593 + 47501 on 9 February. Mark 4 carriages that had been intended for use by Grand Central between London and Blackpool were moved from Wembley to Eastleigh Depot, for debranding, and then on to Worksop in February. Each working comprised twelve vehicles including two driving trailers. Movements from Wembley via Reading were by 57303 and 57305 on 2 February and by 47813 on 16 February. The carriages were hauled to Worksop via Chertsey and Kew East on 25 and 26 February by 47813 and 47812 respectively.

## PERFORMANCE and INCIDENTS

Figures show the percentage of trains arriving within 59 seconds of scheduled time, at all monitored stations. The ranking of the companies within the 23 passenger train operators is shown. Eurostar is not included, but open access operators are. MAA = moving annual average.

	13 Dec to 9 Jan	MAA to 9 Jan	10 Jan to 6 Feb	MAA to 6 Feb
All TOCs	77.8%	75.8%	79.3%	77.2%
SWR	80.1% (8 <sup>th</sup> )	75.7% (11 <sup>th</sup> )	81.3% (9 <sup>th</sup> )	78.3% (8 <sup>th</sup> )
GTR	77.0% (12 <sup>th</sup> )	77.9% (7 <sup>th</sup> )	77.3% (13 <sup>th</sup> )	78.7% (7 <sup>th</sup> )
SE	74.0% (15 <sup>th</sup> )	75.3% (12 <sup>th</sup> )	76.7% (15 <sup>th</sup> )	76.4% (12 <sup>th</sup> )

**DB Cargo** has been fined £200,000 for failing to protect the safety of its workers at Dollands Moor. This follows the incident on 4 September 2018 when a train collided with a buggy being driven by a shunter. The shunter suffered very serious injuries. The Office of Rail and Road found that DB Cargo had failed to carry out a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks associated with the movement of people and trains within the yard, and had not implemented a safe system of work. DB Cargo pleaded guilty at a hearing at Folkestone magistrates' court. The RAIB report into the incident was summarised in the August 2019 issue of *Live Rail*.

**Newington:** The railway between Gillingham and Sittingbourne re-opened, as planned, on 8 February. This followed stabilisation of the cutting slope that failed on 19 January. The line was closed for remedial work from 24 January.

**Nine Elms:** The Windsor Reversible Line reopened in the afternoon on 22 February, following reconstruction of the viaduct parapet and track relaying. The parapet collapsed on Christmas Day during engineering work.

**Trespass & Welfare Officers** were introduced in 2019 as a joint initiative by South Western Railway and Network Rail, in response to a rise in fatalities that appear to be suicides. There are now 140 Officers, who are permanently based at 49 stations full time and visit another 48 on a part-time basis. Since they started the Officers have made 159 crisis interventions, as well as being a reassuring presence.

**Derailment at Eastleigh:** The Rail Accident Investigation Branch has issued its report into the derailment of a Freightliner train at Eastleigh on 28 January 2020. The train had stopped in Eastleigh station at the down slow platform for a crew change. On departure at 11:31 it had used 450A facing points and 450B trailing points to cross from the down slow line to the down fast. While travelling through 450A points the class 70 locomotive derailed, because the track spread under it, but it rerailed at 450B points. The driver promptly brought the train to a halt, but not before the first three wagons of the train and the fifth had derailed. The points are mounted on concrete bearers (extended sleepers) attached to which are cast iron shoulders that carry the rails and their fastenings. The attachment to the bearers had been made by drilling holes into which a pin on the underside of the shoulder fitted. The joint was secured by epoxy chemical grout. Trains passing through 450A points to access the down fast line exert significant lateral force on the rail on the outside of the curve, and this is particularly so with Co-Co locomotives, such as classes 66 and 70. The turning force applied to the shoulders had caused fatigue, leading to fractures in some of the fixing pins. There is evidence that up to six shoulders in 450A points had failed prior to the derailment and a further three fractured during the event. With nine consecutive insecure fixings the rail had moved outwards, causing the derailment. The points had been inspected as required by Network Rail standards, but the fractures were under the shoulder and below the surface of the bearer so could not be seen. Although the crossover is heavily used by freight and passenger trains, it was not traversed by track recording trains; there were separate runs on the down fast and down slow lines. The only checks that the crossover remained true to gauge were by staff on the track taking measurements, which would not detect any movement of the rails when under load. Research is under way to find a way of detecting hidden fractures in this type of track fixing, but since 450 points were installed the design of the bearers has been changed, so the shoulder is embedded in the concrete.

**Saturday 23 Jan:** Unit 171728 derailed when entering Selhurst Depot during the night.

**Sunday 24 Jan:** A car was driven onto the railway at Stone level crossing, between Teynham and Faversham, in the early hours. The driver abandoned the vehicle but was later apprehended by BT Police.

**Monday 25 Jan:** The line was blocked for about two hours early in the afternoon after a broken rail was found at Erith. Trains were diverted via Bexleyheath.

**Tuesday 26 Jan:** The 07:24 Peterborough to Horsham failed at Redhill with a locked wheelset. It blocked platform 3, the down loop, until it could be moved on a wheel skate to Three Bridges depot overnight. Fortunately, all of the platforms at Redhill have bidirectional signals, so down trains could use platform 2. That required some up trains to be diverted via platform 0. Trains to Tonbridge were cancelled in order to accommodate the afternoon and evening peak service. Disruption was made worse during the afternoon by fatalities at Billingshurst and Balcombe. The 09:27 Kingston Loop service failed on the down slow line between Wimbledon and Raynes Park. There were no trains via Botley after 10:00, because of a points failure at Eastleigh. Trains between Portsmouth and Waterloo via Winchester were diverted via St Denys until late Wednesday morning.

**Wednesday 27 Jan:** A faulty cable caused loss of power to signalling in the Cuxton area about 05:40, preventing trains running between Strood and Maidstone West. The problem could not be resolved easily and the line was closed until Thursday afternoon. The 09:30 Brighton to Southampton became stranded near Sholing, because of a power fault. The line was blocked until the train could be assisted forward late afternoon. Fortunately, the line through Botley re-opened just before this happened, so some trains could be diverted that way. Others were cancelled.

**Thursday 28 Jan:** Flooding between Epsom and Ashted closed the line for about two hours from 08:00. Guildford trains were diverted via Cobham and others terminated short or were cancelled entirely. Services between Bournemouth and Poole were suspended for about three hours from 10:00, because of a lineside fire between Bournemouth and Branksome. Flooding at Clapham Junction caused points at Falcon Junction to fail. A fatality at Three Bridges about 17:30 caused disruption for the rest of the day.

**Friday 29 Jan:** The continuing points failure at Clapham Junction meant that all Southern services to and from Milton Keynes were cancelled and did not resume until Monday. There were no trains from Arundel Junction to Horsham until after 09:30, because a failed engineering train near Christ's Hospital was blocking the up line. Trains were cancelled or diverted via Hove meantime. A complete failure of signalling in the Plumstead area resulted in trains being diverted via Bexleyheath or Sidcup, but with some cancellations, until 09:00.

**Saturday 30 Jan:** An overnight aggregate train from Peak Forest to Crawley New Yard stalled on the gradient between Herne Hill and Tulse Hill, blocking the line until 08:30. It would not normally have been routed that way, but was diverted because of the flooding and points failure at Clapham Junction. Heavy rain resulted in lines being flooded at Falconwood, Mitcham Junction, Bagshot and Sway.

**Sunday 31 Jan:** The line was closed between Ascot and Sunningdale throughout the evening, because of a tree on the line. Up trains were unable to call at Worthing during the evening, because the subway was flooded. Normal service resumed late morning on Monday after the water had been pumped out.

**Monday 1 Feb:** A cable fire at Orpington put the up slow line out of use from 07:30 until 11:00. Some suburban trains were cancelled or diverted to Swanley. A fault with the bridge over the River Stour at Christchurch resulted in single-line working between Bournemouth and Brockenhurst for most of the morning. It is 15 miles between crossovers! Normal service resumed during the afternoon.

**High Brooms:** A land slip in a cutting at High Brooms on 1 February required a 5 mph speed restriction to be imposed during the morning and the line was closed from midday. Two further slips occurred, requiring extensive remedial work, so the line did not reopen until 20 February. Work away from the line continued after that. Meantime, the gypsum trains between Southampton Docks and Mountfield were routed via Ashford and Hastings. Normally, the only freight on the Marshlink route is nuclear traffic between Dungeness and Sellafield via Ashford and Crewe. Trains had to be worked top and tail, to allow for the additional reversal at Mountfield; 59003 was among the locomotives used for this. While the line was closed units at Hastings needing attention at Ramsgate had to run via Eastbourne and Redhill. The closure was extended to Robertsbridge during the week commencing 15 February, in order to accelerate the cutting stabilisation work at Wadhurst Tunnel. While the line was closed the opportunity was taken to do other work, including repairs to Southborough Viaduct and Wells Tunnel. Work to reinforce earthworks at Stonegate was scheduled for Easter.

**Tuesday 2 Feb:** Three wagons of an aggregate train derailed in Chichester yard about 09:00, fortunately not obstructing the main lines.

**Wednesday 3 Feb:** Flooding at New Milton disrupted services from 09:30 until 16:00. For most of this time trains were unable to run between Brockenhurst and Bournemouth.

**Thursday 4 Feb:** A 5 mph speed restriction was imposed on the down fast line near Salfords after movement was detected in the embankment slope. This followed problems in the area a month earlier. As well as causing delays, the speed restriction required some trains to be cancelled, including trains between Victoria and Brighton. Most Great Western services to Gatwick Airport were cut back to Redhill. Following further work to the embankment, it was possible to ease the speed restriction to 20 mph on 16 February, allowing the cancelled trains to be reinstated. A power failure at Ebbsfleet caused significant delays and cancellations during the evening.

**Friday 5 Feb:** There were no trains between Margate and Faversham for three hours during the morning after a body was found by the line near Chestfield & Swalecliffe.

**Sunday 7 Feb:** Unit 455844 derailed in Selhurst depot during the night. With heavy snow forecast, Southeastern cancelled all trains on the following lines: Bromley North – Grove Park, Tunbridge Wells – Hastings (Tonbridge to Tunbridge Wells was already closed, see above), Paddock Wood – Strood, Sittingbourne – Sheerness, Faversham – Dover and Ramsgate – Dover. Sandling and Westenhanger stations were closed. Southern cancelled services to Uckfield and between Ashford and Hastings. The 12:35 Ashford to Victoria became stranded at Harrietsham, because of loss of power, and could not be moved until the early hours of Monday. Some down trains continued to run during the afternoon, but there was no service in either direction during the evening. Engineering work prevented diversions via Tonbridge. Snow caused the last train from Redhill to Tonbridge to be the 18:07. There were no more trains via Oxted after the 19:12 from East Grinstead was immobilised at Upper Warlingham. Most Thameslink workings to Sevenoaks were cancelled after 19:00. The only Southeastern services to operate after 21:00 were a few high-speed trains.

**Monday 8 Feb:** A substantial part of the Southeastern network was closed, because of snow. In addition to lines shut all day on Sunday, there was no service via Maidstone East and trains between Victoria and Dartford were cancelled. Other services on the Dartford lines were subject to alteration. Passenger services started later than usual on lines that were open, in order to allow empty trains to be used to check conductor rails were clear. Despite that, the 06:00 Charing Cross to Tonbridge became stranded south of Grove Park, because of ice on the conductor rail. It eventually reached Chislehurst, where it terminated, almost three hours late. An empty train from London Bridge to Selhurst failed near Streatham about 07:00, blocking the line for almost two hours. An electrical fire shortly before 07:00 cut off power between Portsmouth & Southsea and Portsmouth Harbour. Normal service resumed about midday. The 15:54 Charing Cross to Dartford failed between Waterloo East and London Bridge, because of a problem with the doors.

**Tuesday 9 Feb:** The Medway Valley line and the Sheerness and Bromley North branches remained closed and did not re-open until Wednesday. Network Rail said that this was because de-icing trains were concentrated on keeping the main lines open. Other Southeastern lines were open, except for Tonbridge to Tunbridge Wells because of the land slip, but early morning trains were cancelled. A points failure mid-morning caused delays at West Croydon. London Overground services were diverted to Crystal Palace. A member of staff who was inspecting points and crossings at Surbiton died when struck by the 11:20 Waterloo to Salisbury. As, very sadly, this was a workplace death, investigations took longer than is usual following a fatality, so lines were blocked until 16:00. Trains were cancelled, terminated short or diverted via Chertsey or Epsom.

**Wednesday 10 Feb:** Late evening trains between Aldershot and Ascot were cancelled following failure of Camberley level crossing.

**Thursday 11 Feb:** The 06:49 from Gatwick Airport failed between Wandsworth Common and Clapham Junction, blocking the up fast line for about two hours.

**Friday 12 Feb:** There was a limited morning service on the Sheerness branch, including cancellation of the first two trains. The empty train to work the branch failed at Faversham, where it stables. A power failure resulted in the 06:09 from Victoria and the 06:36 from Reigate becoming stranded between Redhill and Reigate. Services between Redhill and Reigate did not resume until the afternoon. A person being pursued by the police entered Penge Tunnel and suffered an electric shock from a live rail. The 21:58 Victoria to Orpington was detained at Sydenham Hill and the 21:54 from Orpington at Penge East almost until midnight. Other trains were diverted via Catford.

**Saturday 13 Feb:** The 06:42 Victoria to Gillingham, unit 375609, failed at Sole Street and terminated there. Following trains were delayed by up to an hour and the 08:10 Victoria to Faversham was diverted via Dartford. This also resulted in Networkers 465927+466010 spending the day working between Victoria, Faversham and Ramsgate. A track circuit failure at Botley and signalling problems at Romsey caused lengthy delays and disruption during the morning. Great

Western services to and from Portsmouth were particularly badly affected, as they were diverted that way because of engineering work at Southampton.

**Monday 15 Feb:** The 04:22 Southampton Maritime to Leeds Freightliner train, hauled by 70015 and running about an hour late, failed between Romsey and Salisbury. The line was blocked until after 10:00. A chalk fall at Abbotscliffe Tunnel, between Folkestone and Dover, resulted in the line being closed for five hours from 09:45. A fairly small amount of material came down, but an engineer had to check that the cliff remained stable.

**Tuesday 16 Feb:** A number of morning peak trains via Lewisham were diverted via Sidcup and Parks Bridge Junction because of a points failure. A chalk fall resulted in the down line from Brighton to Hove being closed for about four hours from shortly after 08:00. Trains were cancelled, diverted via Preston Park or started from Hove. A 5 mph speed restriction was imposed when the line opened, pending overnight work to the slope.

**Wednesday 17 Feb:** There were no trains between Maidstone East and Otford until after 08:00, because points at Borough Green had been damaged during overnight engineering work. There continued to be a points problem at Lewisham, with some diversions.

**Thursday 18 Feb:** The up line from Crystal Palace to Balham was closed for about two hours late morning, because of a fire adjacent to the railway. Trains were cancelled or diverted via Selhurst.

**Monday 22 Feb:** Early morning trains on the Windsor line were delayed or cancelled, because of over-running engineering work between Waterloo and Clapham Junction. Some trains were diverted via the main line and Kingston. The 06:33 from Uckfield failed at Oxted, blocking the line until after 09:00.

**Wednesday 24 Feb:** A points failure at Herne Hill caused Thameslink services via Sutton to be cancelled from mid-morning until early afternoon. The line was closed for about 2½ hours after the 11:29 Victoria to Brighton was involved in a fatality at Wivelsfield. Some Littlehampton trains were diverted via Crawley.

**Saturday 27 Feb:** Multiple track-circuit failures at Norwood Junction about 08:00 caused all lines through the station to be closed for almost an hour. Trains were terminated short, cancelled or diverted via Selhurst and Streatham. Consequent delays and cancellations continued for most of the morning. An engineer's train from Hoo Junction was delayed at Sutton, waiting to enter a possession on the St Helier line. It was blocking the Epsom and Epsom Downs lines for about 40 minutes after its prompt arrival 19:18, causing significant disruption to passenger services.

**Monday 1 March:** London Overground services were suspended from 09:45 until 15:00 because of a fire at Whitechapel.

**Tuesday 2 March:** A points failure resulted in there being no trains to and from Portsmouth Harbour between 05:30 and 07:00. Trains terminated and started at Southsea or Fratton meantime.

**Wednesday 3 March:** There were no trains to Lymington until the 08:42 from Brockenhurst, because of a fault on the unit. Services between Victoria and Dartford were suspended for about three hours shortly after 16:00, because of a track fault between Nunhead and Lewisham.

**Friday 5 March:** A points failure caused services to and from Bognor Regis to be suspended from 06:20 until 07:40. The line was closed for two hours after a body was found between Martin Mill and Walmer about 07:30.

**Saturday 6 March:** The 14:25 from Ramsgate terminated at Paddock Wood with a brake fault. The 15:17 from Ramsgate used the bi-directional signalling to run wrong line from Headcorn and call at the down platform at Paddock Wood. Following trains ran via the up main line, so were not able to stop because Paddock Wood only has platforms on the loops. The failed train was able to continue empty to Tonbridge shortly after 18:00.

**Sunday 7 March:** The 07:40 Victoria to Dorking failed at Carshalton and terminated at Sutton. Following trains were cancelled or diverted via Selhurst and West Croydon, with consequent disruption continuing for most of the morning.

**Monday 8 March:** Unit 450061 derailed at Northam depot during the night. A power failure shortly after 07:00 prevented trains running from Tonbridge to Tunbridge Wells. The 06:00 from Charing Cross and 06:59 from Tonbridge were stranded between High Brooms and Tunbridge Wells, so passengers had to be evacuated to the 07:20 from Hastings on the adjacent track. All services were suspended until shortly before 15:00, with a few trains running between Tunbridge Wells and Hastings. The Bromley North service was suspended during the evening after a bicycle was thrown onto the line near Grove Park and became wedged under the train.

**Wednesday 10 March:** The 15:15 Victoria to Littlehampton failed at Hove and terminated there. Then the 15:51 Littlehampton to Brighton was reported to be on fire East Worthing, with smoke coming from unit 313203. The fire brigade and fitters attended and an attempt was made to move the unit to Lovers Walk about 19:00. That was unsuccessful and another unit was summoned from Littlehampton to assist it forward. The service was badly disrupted until after 20:00.

**Thursday 11 March:** An empty train from Tonbridge to Orpington ran over trampoline which had blown onto the line near Tonbridge. Both lines were blocked until 08:20 while the remains of the trampoline were extracted from under the leading bogie. The 06:40 Ramsgate to Victoria hit a tree near Chilham, as did the 07:36 to Victoria soon after leaving East Grinstead. Fortunately, neither train was seriously damaged, but lines were blocked until mid-morning.

**Friday 12 March:** The 06:24 Cambridge to Brighton failed at Blackfriars and terminated there, blocking the line for over half an hour. A power failure at Charlton prevented use of the down line for almost four hours from 11:00. Trains were diverted via Bexleyheath. A tree fell onto the line between Bournemouth and Poole during the afternoon.

**Saturday 13 March:** There were no trains from Dorking to London from 06:37 until 12:32, after a body was found by the line between Box Hill and Leatherhead. Early morning trains between Haywards Heath and Lewes were diverted via Brighton, because of flooding.

**Monday 15 March:** A cable was caught in the overhead wires near Farringdon, preventing use of the northbound line from 14:00. Both lines were closed from 14:30 while it was removed. Services resumed about 16:00, but there was severe disruption, with many cancellations, for the rest of the day.

**Thursday 18 March:** A points failure about 20:00 resulted in the up line at Gillingham (Kent) being closed for 1½ hours.

**Monday 22 March:** The down main fast line at Queenstown Road was blocked all day, because of a track defect. Trains were diverted to the down Windsor slow line, so no down trains called at Queenstown Road station during the evening peak. The 16:40 Ramsgate to Victoria hit a rock on the line between Ashford and Charing, resulting in power being cut off and the line being closed until after 20:00. Unit 450548 failed at Frimley while working the 21:00 Aldershot to Ascot.

**Tuesday 23 March:** A 5 mph speed restriction over a track defect on the up fast line at Earlswood caused congestion and delays throughout the day. Morning peak services were disrupted by a points failure at Selhurst. As well as delays to many services, some trains were cancelled and those between Croydon and London Bridge via Tulse Hill were diverted via Forest Hill.

## AROUND THE REGION

**Footbridges:** The old footbridge towards the London end of Sittingbourne station was demolished in January. Network Rail said that it was no longer safe to use. A footbridge with lifts was built at the Faversham end of the station in 2011. The new footbridge to Millbrook station has been installed, but extends only from the north side of the line to the platform. The footbridge at Goring-by-Sea has been renovated. The foot crossing at Shere Heath, between Chilworth and Gomshall, is being replaced by a footbridge. A footbridge with lifts is to be provided at Liphook station.

**Sandwich:** Improvements to Sandwich station have been completed in advance of the Open golf championship in July. A sizeable new footbridge has been constructed, as part of a more direct route from the station to the Royal St George's course, but it will only be used when there is a major event. Platform extensions allow longer trains to call, without selective door opening being required or the level crossing being blocked. Whether the championship will be able to go ahead with public attendance has yet to be decided.

**Dover:** Network Rail has completed refurbishment work at Dover Priory station, which was largely rebuilt by the Southern Railway between 1930 and 1932. Repairs have been carried out to steelwork and concrete, the roof to the footbridge has been replaced and the platform canopies overhauled.

**Whitstable:** Glebe Way foot crossing, between Whitstable and Seasalter has been closed and dismantled.

**Maidstone:** An extension on the front of Maidstone East station building has been completed and a paved forecourt created. These are on the site of the Victoria Hotel.

**Penshurst:** An art gallery has opened in a previously disused room at Penshurst station. This has been established by an art community in Chiddingstone Causeway, with funding from GTR's Passenger Benefit Fund.

**Dartford:** Hythe Street underbridge, immediately west of Dartford station, was replaced over the Easter weekend.

**Abbey Wood:** Crossrail trains have been running on test to Abbey Wood since January 2019, but the line from Westbourne Park was formally commissioned on 27 March. The connection to the North Kent line at Alsike Road Junction, between Abbey Wood and Belvedere, is to be commissioned later. This comprises an extension of the westbound Crossrail line and is not electrified, apart from a train length east of the station. The connection to Crossrail from Plumstead Yard, which was used during construction, has been out of use for some time and has been removed.

**Brixton:** The bronze statues of passengers on the platforms at Brixton station are being cleaned and conserved.

**Victoria Resignalling:** Work started in February on resignalling lines between Victoria, Balham and the West London Line. This will continue for two years, with the area being recontrolled to Three Bridges ROC at the beginning of 2023. Work will include installation of 93 new signals and renewal of 50 sets of points. Much of the work will be undertaken at weekends, with trains diverted to London Bridge, but with longer closures at Christmas 2021 and 2022.

**Brighton Line:** Network Rail has awarded a contract to Cellnex UK to provide mobile phone and internet access along the full length of lines from Victoria and London Bridge to Brighton. This includes through the numerous cuttings and tunnels.

**Purley:** Three large paintings have been installed on platform 6, used by trains to Caterham and Tattenham Corner. Each shows an individual associated with the area. They are Amey Johnson, who flew solo from Croydon to Australia in 1930, composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and William Jessop, the engineer of the Surrey Iron Railway. The artwork has been provided by Purley Business Improvement District.

**Eridge:** Southern has departed from its usual colour scheme at Eridge and painted the platform buildings and canopy on platform 1 in traditional Southern Railway green and cream, matching the platforms used by Spa Valley trains. In addition, replica 'bullseye' name signs have been installed. A vacant building on platform 1 has been refurbished as a waiting room.

**Gatwick Airport:** Work to rebuild Gatwick Airport station is ahead of programme. The dramatic reduction in passenger traffic, as a result of Covid-19 travel restrictions, has enabled work to be speeded up, mainly because a larger area can be closed off.

**Burgess Hill:** The original station building, on the up platform, has been converted into a waiting room. In 1877 it was replaced by the building that spans the line at the London end and in recent years had been used as a salt store.

**Bishopstone:** During work to renovate the station contractors opened up the former parcels office and found a remarkable collection of objects that had been there for over thirty years. Items included a pair of water skis, fishing rods, car parts, rowing oars, a skateboard, British Rail advertising posters and a sack of fertiliser. Amazingly, media reports resulted in a teddy bear and some other items being reunited with their original owner, a man whose father used to run the station shop. Southern is to sell most of the other objects and donate the proceeds to the Friends of Bishopstone Station, the station adoption group. They intend to develop the parcels office as a community space.

**Feltham Resignalling:** New signalling was commissioned between North Sheen, Whitton and Norbiton with effect from 7 April and control of this area and the Shepperton branch transferred to Basingstoke ROC. Bi-directional signalling was introduced on Twickenham up loop and on the up line between St Margarets and Stoop Junction (between Twickenham and Whitton). Train detection is by axle counters. In connection with this work, the Kingston loop was closed from 1 to 6 April, also requiring the Shepperton branch to be shut. Barnes to Feltham Junction via Twickenham was closed from 2 to 6 April. The Windsor branch was closed from 6 to 13 March for various works, including installation of new foundations for signalling equipment. Network Rail has announced an amended programme for resignalling the rest of the area controlled from Feltham:

- Egham to Chertsey, Camberley and Bracknell: Easter 2022 (to be confirmed)
- Kew Bridge to Windsor: August 2023
- Earley to Farnborough North: March 2024

Changes from the previous programme are the timescale for resignalling the Virginia Water and Ascot area is to be confirmed and the Staines and Windsor area is put back from October 2022.

**Reading:** The bridge that carried the line from Wokingham over the siding serving Huntley & Palmers biscuit factory was renewed over the weekend of 20/21 March. Biscuit-making in Reading ceased in 1976 and the bridge has been used since 2015 to take a pedestrian and cycle route under the railway.

**Guildford:** Further renewal of points at Guildford at Easter resulted in no trains running at all.

**Portsmouth:** Ten of the seventeen spans of Landport Viaduct were strengthened while the line was closed between Blackfriars Junction and Portsmouth Harbour from 17 to 24 January. Repainting was mostly carried out after that. Work to the other seven spans will be undertaken later. The opportunity was taken to do other work during the closure, including replacing some rails and point heaters, together with timber beams supporting the track at Portsmouth Harbour station. New rail lubricators were installed as well. Timber beams have also been replaced on the bridge carrying the railway over Portsbridge Creek onto Portsea Island, allowing a temporary speed restriction to be removed.

**Southampton:** Track and signalling alterations, to allow operation of longer freight trains, were completed in February. A key improvement is a revised layout at the west end of the Freightliner terminal, allowing direct access from the lengthened reception sidings at Redbridge. That avoids involving the signallers at Eastleigh in local moves between the sidings and the terminal. The mechanical ground frame at Redbridge has been replaced by a power-operated ground switch panel. The access to Western Docks at Millbrook East Junction has been remodelled to allow parallel moves to and from the Down Fast and Down Loop lines. The Arrival and Departure Line has been renamed the Redbridge Goods Line and the Departure Line at Millbrook is now the Maritime Back Road. In order to finish the work all lines were closed between Southampton Central, Brockenhurst and Romsey from 13 to 19 February. Much work had been undertaken prior to this and the closure was required for signalling work affecting the passenger lines. Most trains terminated short while work was under way, but those between Portsmouth and Cardiff were diverted via Botley and Chandlers Ford. As a result of that the stopping service from Salisbury ran only to Romsey, with the Cardiff trains calling at Chandlers Ford.

**Wilton:** A proposal to open a new station at Wilton Junction is under consideration again as part of the Government's plans for reinstating railways. The station would be located where the Westbury and Exeter lines diverge, and have four platforms. It would function as a park+ride for Salisbury, as well as serving the local area. The estimated cost of the station is £20 million.

**Station lighting:** South Western Railway has announced a 21% saving in energy use following the installation of 16,180 LED light fittings at 165 of its stations.

## **OLDEST TRAINS**

*Live Rail* 298 claimed that class 313 units are now the oldest passenger trains used by a franchised train operator. It has been questioned whether some HST vehicles are older. Manufacture of production HST sets commenced in 1975 and they first entered passenger service on the Western Region on 4 October 1976. That was seven weeks after class 313 started running between Drayton Park and Old Street, though the full service to Hertford North and Welwyn Garden City did not commence until 8 November 1976. It is possible that the first production HST vehicle was manufactured before the first 313, but the 313s have been in passenger service longer.

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