

## REGIONAL REVIEW

### STOCK NOTES

**SWR Suburban:** SWR has been obliged to resume C4 overhauls of some class 455 and 456 units, in order to be able to operate suburban services in absence of class 701. Eleven class 455 and four class 456 were out of traffic because they had reached the maximum miles between overhauls and some have been stored at Long Marston. On top of that, seven class 458 units are out of service, due an overhaul or awaiting conversion for main line use. It is expected that 458507 and 458517 will be the first to be converted, this work being undertaken by Alstom at Widnes. Following the December timetable change it was noted that class 707 units were only working some Shepperton services and many SWR suburban trains were short formed.

**Class 387:** The units used by Great Western have been returned to GTR, with moves from Reading to Hornsey thus.

3 December: 387202+206

7 December: 387201+204+205

18 December: 387203

The short gap in electrification between Acton Main Line and Acton Wells Junction required these workings to be locomotive-hauled.

**Class 465:** The class 465/2 units at Worksop are being moved to Papworth Sidings, Ely, apparently because storage costs are lower there.

**Class 707:** Units allocated to Southeastern are 707001-013/25-29. Transfer of the rest has been delayed, because of the delays in getting class 701 into service with SWR.

### TIMETABLES AND DIAGRAMS

**National Rail Timetable:** Although the National Rail Timetable is no longer published in book form, it remains available as a series of PDFs through Network Rail's website. The presentation and numbering of timetables has changed with the December 2021 issue. Southern Region services now appear in tables 150 to 192. The only Southern table to retain its old number is 157, the Portsmouth to Havant summary. Significant changes include separate inner- and outer-suburban timetables being provided for the Reading line, separate tables being provided for each of the routes to Dartford and there no longer being a single table showing all high-speed services from St Pancras. As previously, Eurostar is not included. A significant innovation is that the Timetable now shows train reporting numbers.

**Gatwick Express** is back. Since 12 December a half hourly service has run non-stop from Victoria. Mondays to Saturdays this extends to Brighton, non-stop off-peak. Offsetting this, the Southern service between Victoria and Brighton is withdrawn, so East Croydon and Haywards Heath have a poorer service. Gatwick Express trains make peak time calls at Haywards Heath, Burgess Hill, Hassocks and Preston Park.

**Southern** introduced timetable changes in a somewhat complicated manner, with some service cuts between 13 and 24 December and improvements being phased in. The revised timetable is not fully into effect until 4 January and includes:

- Hourly to Uckfield throughout the day
- Half-hourly London Bridge to Beckenham Junction via Crystal Palace all day
- Additional peak trains between Victoria and Sutton via West Croydon and between Victoria and London Bridge via Crystal Palace

**Thameslink** reintroduced a return trip between Bedford and Littlehampton in each weekday peak from the December timetable change. A train arrives at Littlehampton at 18:37, stables overnight and returns at 05:52. The peak service between Orpington and Luton is increased to half-hourly.

**Freight:** Chessington South is to see rail freight for the first time since 1988, the traffic being spent ballast. A trial trip, hauled by 60028, was made from Willesden on 10 December.

## INTERESTING WORKINGS

**Class 37:** A rake of Grand Central Mark 4 carriages was hauled from Doncaster to Eastleigh Works by 37611 on 4 December.

**Classes 43 and 50:** Locomotive 50008 ran light from Leicester to Eastleigh on 30 November and next day was used to work HST power cars 43480 and 43484 from Eastleigh Yard to Eastleigh Works. The power cars had been on tour in Germany and were returned by road to Eastleigh. On 2 December 50008 ran light to Willesden and returned to Eastleigh Works with power cars 43296, 43308, 43423 and 43467.

**Class 68:** There was a rare appearance of a class 68 at Eastleigh on 14 December, when 68005 arrived from Crewe with wagons for repair at the works and returned with others that had received attention.

**Class 769:** Unit 769925 ran from Reading to Eastleigh and 769928 returned from Eastleigh to Reading on 26 November.

**Orion Parcels:** Commercial parcels operations started on 23 November, with a working from Shieldmuir to Willesden PRDC, with units 319373 and 768001 hauled by 57301.

## RAILWAY BUSINESS

**Go Ahead Group** has been forced to postpone publication of its annual accounts, for a second time, because auditors are still assessing the impact of the claim against the company by the Department for Transport in respect of the Southeastern franchise. In accordance with Stock Exchange rules, that required the company to suspend trading in its shares. This news resulted in a 25% drop in the value of shares.

**Station Usage:** Unsurprisingly, the number of passengers passing through railway stations in the year April 2020 to March 2021 was 78% down on the figure for the previous year. Victoria and London Bridge retained their positions as second and third busiest stations nationally, but Waterloo was knocked back from first to fourth place, with Stratford (the domestic station) being the most used. This is probably accounted for by a high proportion of Waterloo commuters having jobs that allow them to work from home. The top ten busiest Southern Electric stations, showing their national ranking and estimated number of passenger journeys, were:

Ranking	Station	2020/21	2019/20
2 <sup>nd</sup>	London Victoria	13,985,162	73,559,158
3 <sup>rd</sup>	London Bridge	13,763,890	63,095,300
4 <sup>th</sup>	London Waterloo	12,214,626	86,903,518
7 <sup>th</sup>	Clapham Junction	8,370,706	28,892,348
10 <sup>th</sup>	East Croydon	6,695,420	25,005,626
16 <sup>th</sup>	London Charing Cross	5,373,056	29,138,398
19 <sup>th</sup>	Vauxhall	4,986,700	19,997,264
21 <sup>st</sup>	Wimbledon	4,433,406	17,281,626
22 <sup>nd</sup>	Brighton	4,149,082	17,355,572
29 <sup>th</sup>	Reading	2,963,110	16,735,368

The least-used Southern Electric station was Smallbrook Junction, with just 1,268 passengers, down from 12,352 in 2019/20.

**Waterside Wanderer** is a new day ticket (after 09:30 Mon-Fri) allowing unlimited travel on SWR trains between Winchester, Romsey, Southampton and Bursledon. It is also valid on Bluestar buses routes 8 and 9 to Hythe, Calshot and Langley and for one return trip on the Hythe ferry and pier railway. The ticket costs £13.50, or £11.80 for a railcard holder.

## 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 24 passenger train operators is shown. Eurostar is not included, but open access operators are. MAA = moving annual average.

	17 October to 13 Nov	MAA to 13 November
All TOCs	66.6%	76.2%
SWR	65.1% (9 <sup>th</sup> )	77.6% (7 <sup>th</sup> )
GTR	70.5% (7 <sup>th</sup> )	76.6% (8 <sup>th</sup> )
SE	64.0% (12 <sup>th</sup> )	74.0% (13 <sup>th</sup> )

**Monday 22 November:** Over-running engineering work between Waterloo and Queenstown Road, caused by a broken down road-rail vehicle, resulted in cancellations and delays until after 08:00. A signalling problem meant that there were no trains from Hayes between 05:45 and 12:15. A railhead treatment train failed between St Denys and Fareham shortly after midday, blocking the up line until about 16:30. Some trains towards Fareham were diverted via Eastleigh and Botley, but there were numerous cancellations.

**Tuesday 23 November:** The signalling problems on the Hayes branch re-occurred, so there were no trains from 09:00 until 11:55. A points failure late afternoon put the up slow line out of use between Balcombe Tunnel Junction and Three Bridges, so all up trains had to use the fast line to Tinsley Green Junction.

**Wednesday 24 November:** The 07:15 to Bromley North failed at Sundridge Park and the branch service was suspended until the 09:02 from Grove Park.

**Thursday 25 November:** The 08:06 Victoria to West Croydon terminated at Gipsy Hill, because of a problem with the doors. The 16:55 Epsom to London Bridge failed at Ewell East and terminated there. The 16:47 from Tonbridge failed between Nutfield and Redhill. The 17:47 terminated at Godstone so that the train could be used to assist the failure. Services did not resume in either direction until after 20:00. Several trains hit objects that had been thrown onto the line in the vicinity of St Mary Cray during the evening. The 16:48 from Dover Priory became disabled as a result of doing so. The 18:15 from Gillingham terminated at Swanley so that the train could be used to assist the Dover train forward.

**Friday 26 November:** The 13:05 Bedford to Gatwick Airport failed at East Croydon, blocking platform 5. It could not be moved empty to Three Bridges depot until the early hours of Saturday.

**Saturday 27 November:** High winds overnight brought trees down onto the line between Bournemouth and Weymouth and on the Lymington branch. The 05:09 Cosham to Eastleigh, unit 444009, hit a tree between Fareham and Botley. There were no trains from Sheerness until 13:48, because of a signalling fault. The 14:30 Caterham to London Bridge terminated at Purley, because of a fault on the train. The 13:42 Ramsgate to Victoria hit a tree near Charing and the 16:03 from Guildford hit a tree near Clandon. Trees also fell onto the line at Albany Park and Chilham during the afternoon. The 19:15 from Portsmouth Harbour was involved in a fatality at Worplesdon. Fortunately, the line had been cleared at Clandon, allowing diversion of trains until late evening.

**Monday 29 November:** Severe frost on conductor rails between Winchester and Micheldever caused significant disruption until after the morning peak. Some trains were diverted via Havant. There were also delays and cancellations between Ascot and Reading because of ice on the conductor rails. A points failure at Three Bridges resulted in a very limited service via Crawley during the afternoon. Numerous trains were cancelled, some services were diverted via Hove and trains between Peterborough and Horsham were cut back to Gatwick Airport.

**Tuesday 30 November:** Morning peak services were subject to delay and cancellation because of a points failure at Kingston.

**Wednesday 1 December:** A power failure affecting traction current and signalling resulted in there being no trains between Eastleigh and Fareham all day. Services were diverted via Southampton. The line did not reopen until late afternoon on Thursday. There were no trains to Sheerness for most of the evening, because of a fault with Kings Ferry Bridge.

**Thursday 2 December:** The 06:10 Brockenhurst to Weymouth became stranded between Wool and Moreton, because of ice on the conductor rail. It terminated at Dorchester South 83 minutes late. The service between Ashford and Ore was suspended for most of the afternoon while police searched the line at Three Oaks for the body of a missing woman.

**Friday 3 December:** Further police operations at Three Oaks resulted in there being no trains from 11:00 until 14:30. The railway was closed for four hours during the middle of the day after a wartime bomb was unearthed on a construction site next to the line between Sholing and Netley. Trains were diverted via Botley.

**Saturday 4 December:** The service between Peterborough and Horsham was withdrawn from early afternoon, because of staff shortage. For the rest of the day Thameslink operated a shuttle between Three Bridges and Horsham.

**Monday 6 December:** Most trains between Ascot and Aldershot were cancelled for two hours from 19:00, because of a points failure at Ash Vale.

**Tuesday 7 December:** A points failure trapped rolling stock in sidings at Bognor, resulting in cancellation of several morning departures. Forecast severe weather resulted in a 50 mph speed restriction being imposed on lines along the coast from Weymouth to Hastings for most of the day. Trains to Lymington and on the Isle of Wight were cancelled. A tree fell onto the line near Sittingbourne. An electrical fire at Margate during the morning resulted in loss of domestic power at the station. During daylight hours down trains were able to call at platform 1, but none at all after dusk. Trains from St Pancras via Ashford terminated at Ramsgate and other services passed through without stopping.

**Wednesday 8 December:** The 19:22 Sevenoaks to Blackfriars hit a person, who survived, at Catford. The line was closed until after 22:00, with trains cancelled or diverted via Herne Hill.

**Thursday 9 December:** A track circuit failure at Liss caused early morning up trains to be diverted via Winchester or cancelled. The 13:07 London Bridge to Uckfield terminated at Oxted with a fault. It was to run empty to Selhurst, but failed completely at Upper Warlingham, blocking the line for 1½ hours.

**Friday 10 December:** The 08:55 Littlehampton to Portsmouth failed at Fishbourne, blocking the line for 1½ hours. It was moved empty to Lovers Walk via Havant by another unit sent from Barnham.

**Saturday 11 December:** A shortage of drivers resulted in there being no trains on the Lymington branch all day.

**Sunday 12 December:** The line was closed late morning after a body was found near Wanborough and the 20:40 Victoria to Margate was involved in a fatality at Meopham. On top of these sad events the 06:28 Brighton to Bedford hit a person, who survived, at Gatwick Airport.

**Monday 13 December:** A points failure resulted in there being no trains between Surrey Quays and Clapham Junction during the morning peak.

**Tuesday 14 December:** A points failure at Three Bridges about 15:30 prevented trains running to and from Horsham for almost two hours. Services were cancelled or diverted via Hove meantime. The 18:39 Victoria to Reigate failed at Clapham Junction and terminated there.

**Wednesday 15 December:** A points failure at Balham prevented trains running via Streatham Hill for over two hours from 11:00. A signal failure at Hayes shortly after 11:00 resulted in trains being cut back to Clock House or Elmers End until 12:45. The 12:00 Waterloo to Haslemere, units 444008+043, failed at Wimbledon and terminated there. The Mountfield to Southampton gypsum empties failed at Stonegate about 12:40, resulting in major disruption to passenger services. A locomotive was sent from Tonbridge to assist and the train terminated there 2½ hours late.

**Thursday 16 December:** The 20:30 Victoria to Epsom Downs was involved in a fatality at Banstead. There were no trains on the branch for the rest of the day.

**Friday 17 December:** Morning peak services were subject to cancellation and delays, because of a points failure at Southerham Junction. An aggregate train from Bardon Hill to Crawley New Yard failed between Herne Hill and Tulse Hill about 21:30, blocking the line for 1½ hours.

**Saturday 18 December:** The 20:05 Waterloo to Poole failed at Winchester and terminated there.

**Monday 20 December:** Tamping was under way on the Seaford branch on Sunday, when the tamping machine developed a fault. It was not possible to re-open the line on Monday, as another machine had to be found to complete the job and correct problems caused by the defective one.

## **AROUND THE REGION**

**Canterbury East:** The new footbridge with lifts has come into use at Canterbury East.

**Appledore:** The renovation of Appledore station building has won a National Railway Heritage Award.

**Eynsford:** Work is underway to stabilise cutting slopes north of Eynsford Tunnel.

**Junction Renewals:** There are no Southern or Gatwick Express trains to Victoria between the close of traffic on 24 December and the early hours of Tuesday 4 January. During this period Pouparts Junction will be entirely renewed and new signal gantries will be erected between Victoria and Balham. Courthill Loop junctions, Lewisham are also being replaced during the same period.

**Streatham Hill:** 526 solar panels are being installed on the roof of Streatham Hill shed. About 42% of the energy generated will be used at the depot and the rest is to be sold to other users. The scheme is being run by Energy Garden, a community benefit society.

**Gatwick Airport:** Work has started on construction of the second concourse over the tracks at Gatwick Airport station.

**Portsmouth Direct Line:** Network Rail is starting on a programme of work to modernise the Portsmouth Direct Line, particularly the section signalled from the traditional boxes at Farncombe, Haslemere and Petersfield. New signalling will be controlled from Basingstoke ROC. The line is closed between Shalford Junction and Petersfield from 12 to 20 February 2022, but work continues until 2024.

**Andover:** Further alterations were made to the track layout in Andover Yard in December, including provision of a new run round loop. Andover ground frame has been abolished, with the points worked from it now being hand-operated. Access to the Ludgershall branch is obtained by operation of an acceptance switch. Although the Annetts Key is no longer needed to work the points, it is retained as physical authority to run to Ludgershall.

**CREDITS:** Colin Duff, John Goodrich, Stuart Hicks