

REGIONAL REVIEW: OCTOBER 2022



Where is this and what has gone wrong? See Incidents on 14 October for the answer! (Photos **Chris Harbott**)

STOCK NOTES

Rolling Stock plans: It is expected that class 701 units will not enter passenger service until early 2023, but this may be optimistic, because staff training has yet to start. It is planned that the units will work initially on services to Windsor and then to Reading. The class 707 units remaining with SWR will not transfer to Southeastern until class 701 can displace them and class 455 remains in service for longer than expected. The conversion of class 458 for main line use has been suspended, because reduced demand means the class 450/444 fleet is sufficient. It had been thought that the class 313 units would be withdrawn from the December timetable change, but they are likely to stagger on into 2023. Their withdrawal depends on transfer of class 377 units from Southeastern to Southern and that requires Southeastern to receive the remaining class 707 units from SWR. The 707s will displace more Networkers from suburban workings to the Maidstone East line and other main line stopping services, replacing the 377s.

Class 92: Revised route clearance instructions have been issued for class 92 locomotives on Kent Sussex and Wessex Routes. They may operate on DC power over the following routes:

- Dollands Moor to Mitre Bridge Junction via Orpington, Catford and Kensington Olympia
- Ashford to Bickley Junction via Maidstone East
- Sevenoaks to Otford Junction
- Shortlands Junction to Brixton Junction via Herne Hill
- Longhedge Junction to Clapham Junction, 48 & 49 Sidings (adjacent to the down Windsor slow line)

No more than three class 92 locomotives drawing power must be present between adjacent substations at the same time. If two locomotives are coupled together in the same train, only one is permitted to be under power. Locomotives working AC at Dollands Moor may not use regenerative braking.

Class 171: Units 171721 to 171726 are being renumbered as 171807 to 171812 respectively as they are augmented to three carriages. 171201 remains numbered as such. Carriages are not being inserted in the two coach units in numerical order. 171810 has 56805 and 171812 has 56801.

Classes 377 and 387: Alstom has entered into a new contract with Govia Thameslink Railway to provide technical support and spare parts for maintenance of the class 377 and 387 units. This is a continuation of the service that was originally supplied by Bombardier and the new contract runs until the end of GTR's national rail contract with the Department for Transport. The value of the contract is potentially about £250 million.

Class 395: The high speed trains are to be refurbished by Hitachi from March 2023. Work is to include replacing seats and carpets and provision of LED lighting and USB charging points. Passenger information will be upgraded and a new internal CCTV system installed. The train will be able to detect how heavily loaded it is. Roof-mounted cameras will record the interface between the pantograph and overhead line, enabling faults to be detected. The £27 million cost of the work is being funded by Eversholt Rail, the owners of the trains.

Class 701: Unit 701030 was hauled back to Eastleigh from Ilford Depot on 14 October.

TIMETABLES and DIAGRAMS

London Marathon: The customary additional services to Blackheath and Maze Hill ran on Sunday 2 October in connection with the London Marathon. Maze Hill was served by trains from Cannon Street to Plumstead, Slade Green or Dartford. Trains ran from Charing Cross to Slade Green or Dartford via Blackheath.

Southeastern Timetable: There are significant changes to the Southeastern timetable from December, reflecting changed travel patterns and in order to reduce congestion at busy junctions. Southeastern reports that passenger numbers at weekday peaks are only 56% of pre-pandemic levels, with weekday off-peak at 77% and weekends at 90%. All Woolwich trains will run to Cannon Street and all Hayes trains will run to Charing Cross, reducing use of the crossovers at Lewisham Junction. There will be an all-day service between Maidstone East and Charing Cross. Peak services between Blackfriars and Beckenham Junction are reinstated and there are additional morning peak trains on the main line from Ashford.

INTERESTING WORKINGS

Class 33: On 13 October 33025 ran light from Southall to Alton via Kew East, to haul a steam locomotive to the Bluebell Railway via Kew East, Kensington and Selhurst. It then returned to Southall via Selhurst and Kensington.

Class 43: Rail Adventure power cars 43468 and 43480 ran from Eastleigh to Tyseley on 7 October.

Class 800: The first LNER train to Eastleigh for rectification of cracking problems was 800205, which arrived on 30 September.

Special Trains: The Royal Scotsman, on a Great Britain tour, ran from Bath Spa to Banbury via Southampton on 30 September, worked top and tail by 66743 and 66746, the pair in maroon livery.

RAILWAY BUSINESS

Southeastern is to do away with first class travel from December. First class on Southeastern was mainly used by season ticket holders, in order to ensure a seat at peak times. Now there is no great difficulty in getting a seat on main line trains and many of those who had first class tickets have jobs that can readily be done from home. There remain about fifty holders of first class seasons from Southeastern stations, but over 3,000 first class seats on Southeastern trains.

South Western Railway: The Reading line has seen a drop in traffic, as a result of commuters switching to Elizabeth line services. In contrast, inner suburban workings to Waterloo are increasingly busy.

Eurostar has advised the House of Commons Transport Select Committee that it is unable to offer services from Ebbsfleet and Ashford, because it needs to concentrate on its most profitable business to and from London. Eurostar is heavily indebted following the pandemic and the high level of access charges on HS1 mean that it has to maximise income. Eurostar draws attention to a capacity problem at St Pancras. UK citizens now need to have their passports stamped on departure and this adds 15 seconds per passenger. An extra French control booth is being added at St

Pancras, but the number of passengers who can pass through the border is reduced from 2,200 per hour to 1,500. Eurostar says that re-introducing calls at Ebbsfleet and Ashford would reduce the number of border control staff at St Pancras. The company is also suffering from a shortage of maintenance engineers at Temple Mills and is concerned as to how traffic patterns might change as a result of reduced business travel and increased energy costs. (It is worth noting that Eurostar charged the same fares from Ebbsfleet and Ashford as from St Pancras. If there are capacity issues at St Pancras, would encouraging people to travel from Ebbsfleet instead be a good idea?)

British Transport Police undertook a special operation between 3 and 9 October against gangs using couriers, often children, to distribute drugs by rail. Several arrests were made in Sussex. BTP used information gained to contact recipients of the drugs, advising where they could obtain support from addiction services.

STRIKES

Southeastern was among the train operators providing no service on 1 and 5 October, because of a strike by drivers. Network Rail staff who are RMT members, including signallers, went on strike 1 and 8 October. A limited timetable operated, similar to that on earlier strike days (and summarised in LR 305), subject to engineering work alterations on 1 October and the lack of Southeastern trains that day. On 1 October there were no trains via Crystal Palace or between Three Bridges and Brighton. SWR's Windsor service was cut back to Feltham, with trains running half-hourly.

Further strikes by Network Rail RMT staff, who include signallers, are to take place on 3, 5 and 7 November.

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. Performance is measured against the timetable that each train operator advertised the previous day. Therefore, although very few trains run on strike days there is still a "good performance", because only a limited timetable was intended.

	21 August to 17 Sept	MAA to 17 Sept
All TOCs	68.2%	70.2%
SWR	70.2% (8 th)	71.5% (9 th)
GTR	65.7% (11 th)	71.9% (8 th)
SE	64.9% (12 th)	68.6% (12 th)

Incident at Twickenham: Network Rail is replacing track circuits with axle counters, on grounds of greater reliability. However, this makes the management of engineering work more complicated because, unlike track circuits, axle counters do not detect trolleys and other equipment when they are put onto the line. Network Rail has a 'line clear verification process' in place, requiring staff to record equipment being placed on the line and removed, but this does not always work. On 8 September 2021 a trolley was left on the up line near Twickenham, following overnight engineering work. It was hit by an empty train at about 25 mph, fortunately without serious consequence. The RAIB refers to this incident in a report into a more serious occurrence six weeks later on the Great Western Main Line at Challow. Staff at Twickenham had not followed safety procedures in a number of respects. RAIB recommends Network Rail to consider how the line clear verification process could be improved in the short term and how a more reliable system could be established in the longer term. Work under way includes consideration of recording equipment placed on the line electronically, rather than by using paper forms. It is also possible that equipment may be linked electronically to the road vehicle that brings it to site, so there will be an alarm if it is not back in the vehicle when work has been completed.

Wednesday 28 September: The 04:48 Gravesend to Charing Cross failed at Crayford with a brake fault. The two units were able to run empty to Slade Green depot after being uncoupled. Up trains were cancelled or diverted until after 08:00. A few trains started from Sidcup.

Thursday 29 September: The 06:15 from Ramsgate and 07:00 from Dover Priory were diverted from Charing Cross to Victoria, because of a signalling failure at Hither Green. Other Charing Cross trains were subject to delays during the morning peak. A signalling problem caused delays and cancellations to Cannon Street services during the evening. Some main line trains started from Blackfriars and Victoria.

Friday 30 September: Evening peak services were disrupted after an empty train from Grove Park to Charing Cross failed at Parks Bridge Junction shortly after 16:00. It returned to the depot after about an hour. The 17:10 Victoria to Dover was disabled after hitting a tree on the line near Shepherdswell, resulting in the line between Canterbury East and Dover Priory being closed for the rest of the day.

Saturday 1 October: The 22:50 Dover Priory to Faversham, badly delayed by the earlier incident, hit another tree near Shepherdswell during the early hours of Saturday.

Sunday 2 October: The 22:17 Brighton to Seaford failed at Moulsecoomb and terminated there, blocking the line until after midnight.

Monday 3 October: The 23:05 Victoria to Horsham was involved in a fatality on the Quarry Line.

Friday 7 October: The 10:55 Victoria to Ashford failed between Shortlands and Beckenham Junction, where it terminated. Following trains were diverted via Catford for about an hour.

Sunday 9 October: The 07:24 Ashford to Victoria was disabled after hitting a golf trolley near Bearsted. The train was able to depart empty to Ashford at 10:46 and others were cancelled or diverted via Tonbridge until then.

Monday 10 October: The empty stock to work the 06:27 Slade Green to Cannon Street, units 707002+005, failed on departure from the depot, blocking the main line. The train returned to the depot about 07:00 following fitter's attention. Meantime, trains via Woolwich were diverted via Bexleyheath.

Tuesday 11 October: A track circuit problem on the Quarry Line resulted in trains being diverted via Redhill throughout the afternoon.

Thursday 13 October: A points failure at Waterloo put the up main relief and down Windsor lines out of use until early afternoon. Trains did not call at Queenstown Road, in order ease congestion and there were modest delays.

Friday 14 October: A signalling failure on the down lines between Berrylands and Surbiton caused significant delays during the morning. The 07:28 Dorking to Waterloo was routed into platform 3 at Epsom, which gives access only to the Sutton line. The train shunted via the up siding to platform 4 and departed 24 minutes late. By calling only at Worcester Park and Raynes Park it managed to reach Waterloo just 15 minutes late. There were no trains between Hove and Arundel Junction after the 21:30 Brighton to Chichester, because a signaller at Lancing was ill.

Saturday 15 October: There were numerous cancellations and delays during the afternoon, because of a track defect near Ashtead. Trains to Waterloo via Bookham were diverted via Cobham.

Sunday 16 October: A Stoneblower running from Crowborough to Horsham failed near Crawley about 08:00, blocking the line for the rest of the morning. Trains were diverted via Hove, with Horsham terminators cut back to Three Bridges.

Monday 17 October: Defective points at Shacklegate Junction prevented trains running from Teddington towards Shepperton or Twickenham all day. Shepperton trains were diverted via Twickenham and Kingston Loop services could only run outward via Richmond and return via Wimbledon. A signalling failure affecting the up line between Mortlake and Barnes about 09:00 caused up Windsor and Reading trains to be diverted via Hounslow for the rest of the day and numerous cancellations. A track fault on the Guildford New Line caused trains to be cancelled or diverted via Woking for three hours from 09:00. Services via Bookham terminated and started at Effingham Junction.

Tuesday 18 October: A points failure at Rainham about 08:30 caused severe delays and cancellations for the rest of the morning. Thameslink services turned back at Gillingham. The 16:18 Dover Priory to Victoria was involved in a fatality at Bickley Jn, resulting in all lines between Bromley South and Swanley being closed for almost 1½ hours. Some trains were diverted via Nunhead and Lewisham, but many were cancelled or severely delayed.

Wednesday 19 October: A Wellingborough to Angerstein Wharf freight train was detained at Angerstein Junction for over two hours from about 07:00, because staff had not arrived at the sidings. Trains to Woolwich via Lewisham had to be diverted via Greenwich.

Thursday 20 October: The 10:55 Dartford to Charing Cross was cancelled, because of an electrical fire on unit 465173. The fire brigade were summoned and the unit was able to retire to Slade Green Depot shortly before 13:00.

Friday 21 October: Loss of power to signalling between Falmer and Lewes resulted in very few trains running after 15:30. Some trains were diverted via Haywards Heath, but most were cancelled.

Sunday 23 October: Afternoon storms brought many trees down onto the railway. The 16:12 Reading to Salisbury hit a tree near Overton, but was able to continue after a delay of almost two hours. The 16:08 Victoria to Dorking hit a tree near Boxhill & Westhumble, as did the 16:32 from Waterloo at Bookham. The Bookham collision was particularly disruptive, because the train pushed the tree some distance before stopping, destroying signalling equipment as it did so. The line did not re-open until Tuesday afternoon. There were also trees on the line at Horsley, London Road Brighton, Godstone, Woldingham, Ewell East, Gloucester Road Junction, Bexleyheath, Catford Bridge and West Wickham. The Brighton side of Victoria station was closed for about two hours during the evening after a trespasser was electrocuted. Trains terminated at Clapham Junction or were diverted to London Bridge.

Monday 24 October: A points failure caused afternoon services to Weymouth to be badly delayed or cut back to Dorchester.

AROUND THE REGION

Hastings line: Work to stabilise earthworks on the Hastings line continues, with further blockages between Tunbridge Wells and St Leonards 22 to 30 October 2022 and 9 to 16 April 2023. Work in October includes relaying track through Wadhurst Tunnel and repairing the slab track at Mountfield Tunnel.

Waterloo: Lambeth Council, with the support of Network Rail and other partners, has commissioned the architecture practice Grimshaw to produce a Waterloo Station Masterplan. This is to demonstrate how the station and the surrounding area could be enhanced. While much has already been done within the station, the arches underneath and the surrounding area particularly need to be improved.

Clapham Junction: Recent station improvements include new emergency exits. Work is under way this autumn to improve the Brighton Yard entrance. There will be more ticket gates, upgraded and larger toilets and new retail units. The ticket office is closing permanently, but there will be more ticket vending machines and the ticket office at the St John's Hill entrance remains open. The staircase from the footbridge to platforms 13 and 14 is to be replaced in December by a wider one.

Portsmouth Direct line: The line is closed between Shalford Junction and Havant from 22 to 30 October 2022 to progress the resignalling project. Track maintenance will also be carried out, together with renewal of drainage at Haslemere and renovation of the platform 2 waiting shelter at Rowlands Castle.

Micheldever: Sidings at Micheldever were relaid in October and the wagons that had been stored there were broken up.

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