

REGIONAL REVIEW: MAY 2023

CLASS 313 WITHDRAWN

The last class 313 units were withdrawn three months short of 47 years in service. Friday 19 May was the final day in passenger service, with units 313203/09/13 working between Brighton and Seaford and 313211/15/19 on services from Littlehampton. The ones on West Coastway came out of traffic during the afternoon to ensure they all finished at Brighton and 313209 also finished early. The last working was 313213 on the 00:23 from Seaford. This normally runs as empty stock to Brighton, but operated specially as a non-stop passenger train.

Units 313201+313213 were used on the railtour from Brighton on 29 April. This ran to Portsmouth Harbour, Bognor Regis, Littlehampton, Hove, Three Bridges, Ore, Newhaven Marine, Haywards Heath and Brighton.

Units 313201+208 ran from Brighton to Eastleigh Works on 10 May, followed by 313206+212 on 17 May. They joined 313202/14/17 which had worked to Eastleigh on 10 March. 313201 is no longer designated for preservation. The Railway Heritage Designation Advisory Board has switched the designation to the Network Rail test unit 313121. This is because it retains 25kV capability and some seats of the original design.

STOCK NOTES

SWR Livery: Further units now in SWR livery are 444022/36 and 450079/98.

Class 73: Locomotive 73202, which was used by Southern, is now operated by GB Railfreight. The *Graham Stenning* nameplates have been removed.

Classes 158 and 159: Normal services via Salisbury resumed on 28 April after SWR's fuel problem had been dealt with. The depot fuel tanks had to be emptied and cleaned, as well as all units being flushed out and having their fuel filters cleaned.

Class 202: Hastings DEMU motor coach 60119 has been recertified for main line operation. This was previously 60019, but has been renumbered to avoid duplicating the number of a class 60 locomotive. It is expected that the coach will be used in unit 1001 later this year, but it carries unit number 1013.

Class 701: Further units stored at Long Marston are 701013/18/26/50/52. 701010 was moved from Eastleigh to Worksop on 11 May. 701027 was hauled from Derby to Eastleigh on 3 May. Units appear to transfer between Derby and Worksop on a regular basis.

TIMETABLES and DIAGRAMS

Southeastern: London Travelwatch and Transport Focus commissioned research into the impact on passengers of the changes to Southeastern's timetable in December 2022. This confirms that those adversely affected by a change are vociferous, while those who benefit are not. An online survey obtained views from 528 passengers. Almost half said that the timetable change was positive for them, while fewer than 20% said they were negatively impacted. The rest were unaffected. The main grumbles were journey times being longer and having to change trains. Overall 26% of passengers have to change trains more than before, while 22% benefit from changing less. However, there is a greater difference among commuters where 35% have to change more, but only 13% change less. There is greatest dissatisfaction on the Bexleyheath line, while users of the Hayes line, which lost its Cannon Street trains, are mostly satisfied with the changes.

INTERESTING WORKINGS

Coronation: South West Railway provided special trains for military personnel taking part in the Coronation. These ran to Waterloo on 2 May for overnight rehearsals and again on Coronation Day. More than 5,000 troops arrived at Waterloo early on 6 May on seven trains operated by SWR and two by West Coast. Additional trains for the public ran to and from Windsor on 7 May, in connection with the Coronation Concert. There were four trains an hour, alternately via Richmond and via Hounslow. This was accommodated by operating a shuttle between Weybridge and Virginia Water, instead of the usual Sunday service from Waterloo to Woking via Chertsey. The last train to Waterloo left Windsor at 02:07.

Class 377: There was an unusual empty stock working from Selhurst Depot to Stewarts Lane during the morning on 18 May, comprising units 377212+377705. Four- and five-coach units do not normally work together.

Class 450: On 9 May units 450029+098 worked the 07.47 Waterloo to Chessington South and 08:34 return.

Excursions: The Locomotive Services' Blue Pullman HST, with power cars 43046+43055, worked a Bournemouth to Llandudno excursion, via Eastleigh and Salisbury on 1 May. Empty stock was from and to Eastleigh Works. It was a very long day, with departure from Bournemouth at 05:25 and arrival back at 00:13. The train ran empty from Crewe to Eastleigh on 30 April and from Eastleigh to Maidenhead on 3 April to work an excursion from there to Scarborough. 47593 and 47828 were on an excursion from Whitchurch (Salop) to Weymouth via Kew East and Chertsey on 20 May.

STRIKES

Having rejected a 4% pay offer, ASLEF called strikes by train drivers on 12 & 31 May and 3 June. This affects companies who have contracts with the Department for Transport, so Southeastern, Govia Thameslink Railway, South Western Railway, CrossCountry and Great Western are among those affected. There is also an ASLEF overtime ban on 13 and 15 to 20 May together with 1 June. RMT members who work for the same train operators were on strike on 13 May and have voted strongly in favour of further strike action. This mainly affects platform staff, guards and conductors.

Southeastern ran no trains on 12 May and the following half-hourly, unless shown otherwise, 07:00 to 19:00 on 13 May:

- Victoria and Bromley South via Herne Hill
- London Bridge and Dartford via Greenwich
- London Bridge and Dartford via Bexleyheath
- London Bridge and Dartford via Sidcup
- London Bridge and Orpington, with some additional trains before 09:30 and after 16:30
- London Bridge and Sevenoaks
- St Pancras and Ebbsfleet
- St Pancras and Ashford, with alternate trains to/from Ramsgate via Canterbury West

Southern ran no trains on 12 May and the following half-hourly 07:00 to 19:00 on 13 May:

- Victoria and Crystal Palace
- Victoria and Epsom Downs via Selhurst
- Victoria and East Grinstead
- Victoria and Clapham Junction, East Croydon and Gatwick Airport
- Victoria and Clapham Junction, East Croydon, Gatwick Airport, Haywards Heath and Brighton
- East Croydon and Tattenham Corner
- Purley and Caterham
- Brighton and Seaford
- Brighton and Eastbourne

- Brighton and Hove
- Brighton and Barnham via Littlehampton
- Three Bridges and Barnham

Gatwick Express did not operate on 12 or 13 May. Thameslink ran no trains on 12 May and the following half-hourly, unless shown otherwise, 07:00 to 19:00 on 13 May:

- Blackfriars and Sevenoaks via Catford and Swanley, hourly
- Blackfriars and all stations East Croydon Three Bridges, except Purley Oaks
- Blackfriars and East Croydon, then all stations Gatwick Airport to Brighton

Most SWR services operated on 12 May, but there were no trains on the Isle of Wight and some suburban services were cancelled. There was a reduced service between Waterloo, Salisbury and Exeter and the Salisbury to Romsey via Southampton trains did not run. SWR ran a limited service between 07:00 and 19:00 on 13 May:

- Waterloo and Windsor via Hounslow, half-hourly, reducing to hourly from mid-afternoon
- Waterloo and Windsor via Richmond, half-hourly
- Waterloo and Woking, quarter-hourly
- Waterloo and Basingstoke, one fast and two semi-fast trains each hour
- Basingstoke and Salisbury, hourly

A few additional trains ran between Waterloo and Twickenham during the middle of the day, prior to the Army v Navy Rugby match.

London Overground staff were not striking, but there were some alterations on 13 May, because other operator's platform staff were on strike. West Croydon trains were diverted to Crystal Palace and Clapham Junction via Denmark Hill trains were diverted to Battersea Park during the morning peak.

Cross Country ran no trains on 12 May and not between Basingstoke and Bournemouth on 13 May. Great Western ran trains from Reading to Redhill and to Basingstoke on 12 & 13 May, but not to Portsmouth.

Southern and Thameslink cancelled some services on ASLEF overtime ban days and Gatwick Express did not operate.

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.

	1 to 30 April	MAA to 30 April
All TOCs	72.4%	67.7%
SWR	74.5% (8 th)	67.7% (10 th)
GTR	75.5% (6 th)	68.5% (9 th)
SE	73.2% (10 th)	65.0% (12 th)

Wednesday 26 April: Early morning trains were cancelled or delayed, because of over-running engineering work between Winchester and Southampton. A track maintenance machine returning to Hither Green from overnight work at Barming suffered a brake fault while crossing from the up fast to up slow line at Chislehurst about 06:00. Both the down fast and up slow lines were blocked until the machine could be assisted to Hither Green about 10:40. With only the up fast and down slow lines available, trains were subject to delays, which got progressively worse. Maidstone East

trains were diverted to Victoria and some others, mostly Hastings and Tunbridge Wells services, were diverted via New Beckenham.

Thursday 27 April: A signalling problem at Charing Cross resulted in some trains turning back at London Bridge during the middle of the day. A broken rail within a set of points on the up line at Brockenhurst caused trains to be diverted via the up loop during the afternoon and evening. A replacement part had to be obtained specially, so this continued until 5 May. A points failure prevented use of No 4 down line from London Bridge for about two hours from 19:30. Southbound Thameslink trains were diverted via Tulse Hill.

Saturday 29 April: A track circuit failure resulted in there being no trains from Hampton Court between 06:54 and 08:54. Trains turned back at Surbiton or were diverted to Chessington meantime.

Sunday 30 April: Over-running engineering work at Weybridge meant that there were no trains until after 08:00.

Monday 1 May: The 05:45 Waterloo to Portsmouth Harbour was involved in a fatality at Woking. The up lines were closed until about 07:20 and the down lines until 08:50. Some Portsmouth line trains were diverted via Cobham and the service was disrupted for the rest of the morning.

Tuesday 2 May: An electrical fire on the down line between Barnham and Chichester about 05:30 caused a significant length of running rail to be damaged. The line was closed for the rest of the day, with Southern operating an hourly shuttle between Havant and Chichester. The 05:28 East Croydon to Uckfield failed at Oxted and terminated there, resulting in cancellation of the 06:33 from Uckfield. A signal failure at Peckham Rye about 05:45 prevented trains running from Tulse Hill for almost three hours. Trains were cancelled or diverted where possible.

Wednesday 3 May: A traction power failure about 07:00 prevented up trains calling at Erith and Belvedere. Both lines were closed from 10:30 until 12:00 to allow repairs to be carried out.

Thursday 4 May: A power failure at Gillingham prevented any trains running until 05:45. There were numerous delays and cancellations, because trains were unable to leave the depot. The 05:09 from London Bridge and 05:20 from West Hampstead were badly delayed by a signalling failure at Woolwich. Following trains were diverted via Bexleyheath or Sidcup until 07:30. The 02:53 from Bedford, due at Brighton at 05:32, lost shoegear at Hassocks after hitting ballast that was piled too high. It was able to continue 79 minutes late. There were numerous cancellations and extensive delays, with a few trains diverted via Lewes. Trains via Hounslow were diverted via Richmond for two hours during the evening, because of a level crossing fault.

Saturday 6 May: A points failure at Redhill caused delays and cancellations for over an hour from 09:30. Some Thameslink services were diverted via the Quarry Line. The 10:31 Cannon Street roundabout service failed at Belvedere heading back towards London. Following trains were cancelled or diverted until 12:30. A tree fell onto the line near Bat & Ball resulting in most trains being diverted via Orpington for over three hours from 15:00, though a few up services were able to pass the obstruction.

Monday 8 May: The line was closed for three hours after an empty train from Littlehampton to Horsham was involved in a fatality at Billingshurst about 06:00. Trains were cancelled or diverted via Hove. The 09:15 Portsmouth Harbour to Waterloo, which started from Portsmouth & Southsea, was diverted via Winchester, because a tree had fallen onto the line between Haslemere and Witley. Other trains were delayed by up to an hour. A track circuit failure caused delays and cancellations between Farnham and Alton throughout the afternoon.

Tuesday 9 May: Heavy rain caused a landslip in the cutting north of Wallers Ash Tunnel about 17:30, blocking the up line. The down line remained open to diesel trains at caution, but was closed from 20:30. Some SWR trains were diverted via Havant and CrossCountry via Laverstock. Soil had to be cleared from the track and support provided to the cutting slope, so the line did not reopen until early afternoon on Wednesday. A track circuit failure resulted in the last train to Alton being the 16:25 from Waterloo. Later trains terminated at Farnham. Repairs were not completed until after the start of service on Wednesday, when the first two services from Alton had to start at Farnham.

Thursday 11 May: A track circuit failure prevented use of the reversible line from London Bridge to Cannon Street during the morning peak. Some trains were diverted to Charing Cross or terminated at London Bridge.

Saturday 13 May: The up fast line was closed between Gatwick Airport and Earlswood from mid-morning, because of a track defect. All trains had to use the up slow pending overnight repairs, but with a reduced service, as a result of the RMT strike, there was little disruption.

Sunday 14 May: A power surge overnight damaged signalling equipment between Pevensey and Normans Bay, resulting in there being no trains to Bexhill until after 21:00. Planned engineering work meant that there were no trains between Bexhill and Rye all day.

Monday 15 May: Early afternoon trains were delayed or cancelled, because of a tree on the line between Faversham and Canterbury East.

Tuesday 16 May: All trains were brought to a stand after a trespasser was seen on the line between Norbury and Thornton Heath about 18:15. While a search was being made for the individual some passengers alighted from trains onto the track, significantly extending the duration of the line closure. It was almost 20:00 before trains were on the move again.

Thursday 18 May: A signalling failure at Cannon Street put platforms 1 to 3 out of use until the afternoon, leading to cancellations and delays.

Friday 19 May: A fire next to the track at London Bridge about 21:00 put platforms 6 and 7 out of use. Platforms 4 and 5 were closed from 22:00 and the fire was not extinguished until after 23:00. About half a kilometre of signalling cable was damaged, meaning the platforms 6 and 7 could not be reopened until Sunday. They are used by down Charing Cross trains, which had to be diverted via platform 2. Orpington trains were diverted to Cannon Street.

Saturday 20 May: A bicycle was thrown onto the railway between Branksome and Parkstone about 11:00, causing the power to trip and some damage to the track. The down line was closed for 1½ hours and the up line for two hours.

Monday 22 May: Damage to a set of points at Charing Cross prevented use of platform 4 until further notice, making operation of the station even more challenging than usual. It is commendable that there have been few delays. A track defect resulted in afternoon trains between Weybridge and Virginia Water being cancelled.

Tuesday 23 May: There were no trains between Eastbourne and Hastings until after 10:00, because of a signalling failure at Pevensey. A Cliffe to Neasden aggregate train failed at Lewisham Vale Junction about 11:30, blocking the line for nearly four hours. Trains between Victoria and Dartford were cancelled and trains to Charing Cross from Hither Green all ran via Parks Bridge Junction.

AROUND THE REGION

Robertsbridge: Network Rail has publicised the work of Angela Badrock, a signaller at Robertsbridge, as part of its efforts to attract more women to work on the railway. Ms Badrock has worked as a signaller for eleven years, having started at Rye signal box. She says “I like the technical side of my job and how the day to day running can change at a moment’s notice from delays to failures. It amazes me that I still learn new things within the role. I work in a lever frame box, which is very traditional, and I just love it. I went in as a complete novice. Network Rail trains you and teaches you everything you need to know. Being a signaller is a great career and if you want to progress, the opportunities are endless. Since I started 11 years ago, the railway is a completely different place and there are so many women now in senior positions. We even have a regional managing director, who is a woman. I genuinely couldn’t have imagined that a decade ago.”

Access for all: Lifts are to be provided to the platforms at Isleworth and Plumstead.

Peckham Rye: The public has access to the extraordinary former waiting room in Peckham Rye station building, which is hosting an art exhibition until 17 September 2023. The room was converted to a billiards hall in 1922, but has been disused for over sixty years. Extensive renovation has been under way at the station, making this new use possible. The exhibition is open Wednesday to Sunday 12:00 to 20:00 (18:00 on Sunday) and is free of charge.

Victoria Area Resignalling: Work is under way on resignalling the Tulse Hill and Crystal Palace area. The switch to Three Bridges ROC in February 2024 will complete the transfer of control of the Sussex Route lines from Victoria Area Signalling Centre.

Kenley: A new cycle hub has come into use at Kenley station, as a joint project promoted by Southern and Croydon Council. This provides secure cycle parking, covered by CCTV, with a repair stand and a pump for tyres.

Staines: Staines Down Goods Loop is being abolished at the end of May, as part of the Feltham Area resignalling scheme.

CREDITS: William Davies, Colin Duff, John Goodrich, Stuart Hicks, Rick Squirrel