

REGIONAL REVIEW: DECEMBER 2023

STOCK NOTES

Class 458: Unit 458417 ran from Bournemouth Depot to Wimbledon Park Depot on 27 November. 458424 was delivered to Bournemouth on 13 December and 458504 departed.

Class 701: Recent moves have included:

21 November	701523 Derby to Eastleigh
22 November	701515+701516 Eastleigh to Bicester MoD
24 November	701524 Derby to Eastleigh
28 November	701517+701519 Eastleigh to Long Marston
1 December	701525 Derby to Eastleigh
5 December	701003 Derby to Wembley Inter City Depot
19 December	701526 Derby to Eastleigh

TIMETABLES and DIAGRAMS

Freight: Freight traffic has returned to the Coastway route east of Chichester. From 11 December Freightliner has operated 09:11 Westbury to Crawley New Yard via Hove (arriving at 13:26) and 18:31 return to Merehead Quarry. The eastbound train is scheduled on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and the westbound on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. 59102 inaugurated the service on 11 December. A number of Freightliner light engine route learning trips operated prior to this. GBRf has for some time had a conditional path for 09:28 Crawley New Yard to Cardiff Docks aggregate empties via Hove, but this appears never to have operated.

Boxing Day: The only trains running on 26 December were from Victoria, half hourly.

- All stations except Wandsworth Common to East Croydon via Crystal Palace
- All stations to Sutton via Selhurst
- Clapham Junction, East Croydon and Gatwick Airport, with alternate trains continuing to Three Bridges, Haywards Heath and Brighton

The Gatwick trains ran from 05:00, with others starting at 08:30. Services ended between 21:00 and 22:00.

INTERESTING WORKINGS

Class 465: Units 465023+194 worked the 12:48 Cannon Street to Ramsgate and 15:52 return on 16 December. The 12:48 was a pair of 465s next day, but the return working was cancelled, probably because the driver was not passed to work the class.

Excursions: On 25 November 40145, numbered as D345, worked an excursion from Burton-on-Trent to Salisbury via Didcot and Southampton. 33207+33029 hauled an Eastleigh to Chester excursion on 9 December, with 47826 on the rear. The train ran via Southampton, the Severn Tunnel and Shrewsbury, recalling when class 33 worked passenger services between Crewe and Cardiff from 1981 until 1986.

Freight: With the line blocked for engineering work at Brookwood on 8 December, the 04:21 Merehead Quarry to Woking aggregate train was scheduled via Eastleigh and Havant. Unfortunately, it was incorrectly routed at Salisbury and sent via Andover, as usual. A very short term plan schedule was hastily put together to route it from Basingstoke via Reading, Willesden South West Sidings, Kensington Olympia, Twickenham and Chertsey. The revised route via Havant and Eastleigh was taken on the 14:00 return working, with the rare sight of a freight train on the Portsmouth Direct line. The locomotive was 59205.

RAIL BUSINESS

Passenger Station Use: The Office of Rail and Road has published its estimates of station use in the year 2022/23. This shows the dramatic effect of the Elizabeth Line, with its Central London stations all coming in the busiest top twenty. As a result, Waterloo is no longer the busiest National Rail station, having been relegated to third place by Liverpool Street (80,448,194 journeys) and Paddington (59,182,926). The ten busiest Southern Electric stations are listed below, showing national ranking, estimated number of journeys and, a new feature, identification of the station to and from which most journeys are made.

3	London Waterloo	57,789,780	Clapham Junction
4	London Bridge	47,657,264	East Croydon
5	London Victoria	45,563,972	Gatwick Airport
16	Clapham Junction	20,790,150	London Waterloo
20	East Croydon	18,514,458	London Victoria
22	Gatwick Airport	16,507,980	London Victoria
24	London Charing Cross	16,191,196	Lewisham
25	Brighton	14,052,890	London Victoria
26	Vauxhall	13,012,334	Wimbledon
27	London Blackfriars	12,904,992	Brighton

Clapham Junction remains the station with the greatest number of interchanges, at 19,090,976, followed by London Bridge (14,058,086) and Blackfriars (7,722,022). The least used Southern Electric station is Pevensey Bay, with just 5,192 journeys.

The data is of interest for demonstrating how much travel there is by high speed services from Kent and even a few stations in East Sussex. Stations where St Pancras is the most popular destination include Ashford International, Broadstairs, Canterbury West, Deal, Dover Priory, Faversham, Folkestone Central, Folkestone West, Gravesend, Halling, Maidstone Barracks, Maidstone West, Margate, Martin Mill, Ramsgate, Rye, Sandling, Sittingbourne, Snodland, Strood, Walmer, Westenhanger, Whitstable and Winchelsea. There are likely to be others where most London journeys are to St Pancras, but the greatest number of trips are made to the nearest town. In complete contrast, the only station where Charing Cross is the main destination is Tonbridge. At most Southeastern stations where there is no high speed option the most popular destinations are London Bridge and Victoria. It is also interesting to note the split in traffic between London and Brighton, with Thameslink having a substantial share. There were 1.6m journeys between Victoria and Brighton and 1.3m to and from Blackfriars. Adding in travel from Brighton to London Bridge and other Central London stations, it is very likely that Thameslink is carrying the majority of passengers between London and Brighton.

Southeastern Ticketing: Southeastern has introduced digital season tickets that passengers hold on their mobile phone. The company has also modified its ticket machines so they can sell tickets between any two National Rail stations, rather than just from the station at which the machine is located.

South Western Railway: Claire Mann, the Managing Director of South Western Railway, is leaving the company at the end of March 2024, to become Chief Operating Officer at Transport for London.

Network Rail: Mark Goodall has been appointed Route Director for Wessex Route. He currently works as Service Delivery Director at CrossCountry and will be taking up his new role in February.

INDUSTRIAL ACTION

RMT members at train operators sponsored by the Department for Transport have voted to accept the 2022 pay rise and the memorandum of understanding concerning the review of working practices. This should result in no more

strikes, at least until May. The RMT published the full ballot results, which showed the number of members at each train company, including 1,983 at SWR, 1,975 at GTR, 1,401 at Southeastern and 33 at Island Line.

The ASLEF overtime ban between 1 and 9 December resulted in a number of cancellations, including no trains on the Lymington branch after the 16:59 from Lymington Pier. Gatwick Express was entirely cancelled, except on 3 December when there was an ASLEF strike at Thameslink. There was a reduced Thameslink service on 6 December. Longer distance trains ran hourly, except Bedford to Brighton was half-hourly. Cambridge trains terminated and started at Three Bridges. Sevenoaks trains ran via Orpington, instead of Swanley, and were hourly after 19:30. Most Welwyn Garden City peak services to and from Sevenoaks were cancelled.

There were ASLEF strikes at Southeastern, Southern, Gatwick Express and South Western Railway on 6 December. There were no Southeastern trains. Southern just ran a shuttle between Victoria and Gatwick Airport. SWR operated the following service between 07:00 and 19:00:

- Waterloo and Feltham, all stations except Queenstown Road half-hourly
- Waterloo and Woking, all stations half-hourly off peak, quarter-hourly at peak times
- Waterloo and Guildford calling at Clapham Junction, Surbiton, Woking and Worplesdon hourly
- Waterloo and Basingstoke, calling at Clapham Junction, Surbiton and all stations from Woking, hourly
- Basingstoke and Salisbury, all stations hourly

ASLEF strikes on 7 December resulted in there being no CrossCountry trains. Great Western operated hourly between Reading and Basingstoke from 07:30 until 19:30 and at peak times to Redhill.

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.

	15 October to 11 November	MAA to 11 November	12 November to 9 December	MAA to 9 December
All TOCs	62.2%	67.8%	58.3%	67.6%
SWR	58.5% (11 th)	67.4% (11 th)	67.2% (5 th)	67.2% (10 th)
GTR	64.6% (8 th)	69.0% (10 th)	62.0% (10 th)	69.1% (9 th)
SE	64.1% (9 th)	66.4% (12 th)	59.6% (12 th)	66.8% (11 th)

Wednesday 22 November: A points failure at Tulse Hill prevented trains running to or from Peckham Rye until after 07:30. Trains were cancelled or diverted via Forest Hill.

Thursday 23 November: A car collided with the parapet of St James Road bridge, West Croydon during the night, resulting in a large amount of rubble falling onto the tracks. The line between West Croydon and Norwood Junction was closed throughout the morning. London Overground services were cut back to Surrey Quays or diverted to Crystal Palace. Many trains were cancelled, but some Southern services between Victoria and Sutton via West Croydon ran instead via Mitcham Junction; West Croydon terminators were diverted to South Croydon. The 15:20 from Victoria failed at Dormans and could not be moved until the evening. The next train from Victoria to East Grinstead was the 20:50.

Friday 24 November: A signalling failure at Denmark Hill resulted in London Overground services being cancelled for most of the afternoon. There were no trains to or from Bognor Regis for two hours during the evening peak, because of a points failure. The 20:57 Cannon Street to Orpington failed at Hither Green and terminated there.

Saturday 25 November: A points failure at Epsom meant that there were no trains from Waterloo until the 08:24 to Dorking. Down trains were diverted via Cobham, but up trains were able to run normally. Locomotive 66846 derailed at Eastbourne during the evening while working an engineering train within a possession. A set of points was damaged and

could not be repaired before the possession was given up, so platform 3 was out of use for about a week. That resulted in Brighton trains terminating and starting at Eastbourne being cancelled.

Monday 27 November: There were no trains to or from Uckfield during the morning, because of a points failure. The train to form the 15:43 to London Bridge failed at Beckenham Junction. It was able to depart empty to London Bridge at 16:56 and passenger services resumed with the 17:14 from London Bridge. Meantime, trains turned back at Birkbeck.

Tuesday 28 November: The 04:33 Orpington to Luton was involved in a fatality at Shortlands, resulting in all lines being closed until after 07:00. The line was closed for about 1½ hours from 16:30 after a bus hit the barriers at Roundstone level crossing, near Angmering. The 16:20 East Croydon to London Bridge failed between Streatham Common and Streatham and could not be moved. Passengers were evacuated to the 17:31 London Bridge to East Croydon on the adjacent track, but there was a delay in doing so because several people had already alighted onto the line. Current had to be isolated, also affecting the line through Streatham. Thameslink services were cancelled, with trains between London Bridge and East Croydon diverted via Crystal Palace. The failed train was not moved until about 23:30.

Wednesday 29 November: Trains from Lewisham to Charing Cross were unable to run via Lewisham Vale Junction until the middle of the afternoon, because of a points failure at Tanners Hill Junction. Trains from Hither Green to Charing Cross via Lewisham were diverted via Parks Bridge Junction. Trains from Blackheath to Charing Cross had to follow a tortuous route from Lewisham via St Johns, No 3 up line from New Cross, No 4 down line (reversibly signalled) from North Kent East Junction, Southwark reversible line from Surrey Canal Jn (normally used only by Thameslink from Rainham) and No 7 reversible line (normally used by down trains) from Southwark Park Road. This caused delays of up to ten minutes during the morning peak, but there was reasonable punctuality thereafter.

Thursday 30 September: A points failure at Wimbledon resulted in there being no Thameslink services between 07:00 and 08:40. The 12:50 Waterloo to Reading was involved in a fatality at Mortlake. Trains were cancelled or diverted via Hounslow until 17:00.

Friday 1 December: The 06:43 Dover Priory to Victoria was stranded for an hour at Bekesbourne, because of ice on the conductor rail. Services thereafter were suspended until a deicing train had operated. The late-running 18:04 from Charing Cross suffered a brake fault, losing half an hour between Hither Green and Albany Park, where it terminated at 19:28. Immediately following trains were delayed up to 1½ hours, with others diverted via Bexleyheath. Freezing conditions in East Kent caused late evening trains to become stranded, because of ice on the conductor rails. The 21:12 Ramsgate to Charing Cross became stuck between Wye and Ashford and was assisted forward by an empty train, reaching Ashford, where it terminated, at midnight. The following 21:50 Margate to St Pancras was held at Canterbury West for two hours and terminated at Ashford. The 20:59 Charing Cross to Dover Priory was stranded following departure from Ashford, but was able to return to the station about 23:30. The 22:07 Ramsgate to St Pancras failed to reach Martin Mill and returned to Walmer shortly after midnight. The 22:40 Ramsgate to Tonbridge was unable to reach Deal and returned to Sandwich about 23:40. The 22:50 Dover Priory to Victoria ran into difficulties between Kearsney and Shepherds Well and terminated at Faversham at 03:27. The 23:07 Ramsgate to Ashford via Dover was cancelled. The 22:59 from Charing Cross had to wait outside Dover Priory until 01:50 before frozen points could be cleared. The 22:07 St Pancras to Ramsgate was held for almost an hour outside Ashford, because platforms were blocked by stranded trains. It was later unable to manage the climb from Dover to Martin Mill. The train returned to Dover, but made a second attempt to reach Martin Mill after a deicing train had run. That was unsuccessful, as was an effort to use the 23:07 from St Pancras to assist. The combined trains returned to Ashford and ran to Ramsgate via Canterbury West, arriving at 04:59.

Saturday 2 December: Freezing conditions caused early morning trains between Ramsgate and Dover to be cancelled or diverted via Canterbury West. The first trains were the 07:46 from Ashford and 08:07 from Ramsgate. A points failure at Brockenhurst about 07:00 blocked the up line for 2½ hours. Reactionary delays and cancellations continued into the afternoon. There were severe delays to late evening trains on the Hastings line, because of snow and ice. The 22:51 Hastings to Tonbridge did not reach its destination until 02:29 and the 23:40 arrived at 03:26. The 23:08 from Charing Cross arrived at Hastings at 03:14 and the 23:45 at 03:36.

Sunday 3 December: A car crashed through a wall and onto the railway at New Beckenham during the night, but the later start to services on Sunday resulted in the line being clear in time for the first trains. The 12:15 Ore to Victoria was diverted via Brighton, because of flooding between Lewes and Keymer Junction. Other trains were delayed.

Tuesday 5 December: A broken rail was found at Brockenhurst level crossing during the night. A new length had to be laid urgently, so there were no trains until after 07:00.

Thursday 7 December: Unit 158766 derailed in Fratton Depot during the night, blocking all sidings. Only one of the six trains scheduled to leave the depot in the morning was able to depart on time. There were a few cancellations in the morning, but trains that had been stabled at Portsmouth Harbour station or Southsea Down Carriage Sidings were split, so most services ran, but with fewer carriages than usual. Great Western services to and from Portsmouth were all cancelled, because of an ASLEF strike. Services on the Isle of Wight were suspended for two hours after the 08:14 from Shanklin failed at Brading. A track circuit failure between St Denys and Southampton caused major disruption from late morning onwards. By late afternoon some services were over an hour late and there were an increasing number of cancellations. Some trains from Brighton and Victoria terminated at Fareham.

Friday 8 December: The 10:00 to Epsom Downs, units 377139+407, failed outside Victoria station, blocking the down slow line and platforms 9, 10 and 11. Passengers were evacuated to a train on the up slow after about two hours. The train was finally on the move shortly before 14:00. The 14:36 to West Croydon, unit 377601, became stranded at the same place and passengers again had to be evacuated to a train in the adjacent track. 377601 was found to have damaged shoe gear, but was able to run empty to Selhurst Depot soon after 18:00. A defective conductor rail was discovered in the station throat, with some arcing damage to running rails. On top of all this, unit 377113 derailed at Stewarts Lane Depot late morning. There were numerous delays and cancellations to Victoria services, with a few trains diverted to London Bridge.

Saturday 9 December: Flooding at Falmer caused the line to be closed for almost two hours from about 09:30. Most trains were cancelled, but a few were diverted via Wivelsfield.

Sunday 10 December: There were no trains on the Seaford branch until the 12:17 from Brighton, because of a signalling failure. The 14:24 Minster to Victoria hit a tree on the line near Pluckley.

Monday 11 December: There were no trains to Hayes until after 07:00, because of a tree blocking the line at New Beckenham.

Tuesday 12 December: A signalling failure between Orpington and Sevenoaks caused delays and disruption throughout the afternoon and evening. Some fast services were diverted via Bat & Ball.

Wednesday 13 December: The 14:39 from Reading, units 458526+534, failed at Feltham with a brake fault and was immobile for almost 1 ½ hours. Following trains were severely delayed or cancelled. The 15:33 from Weybridge reversed at Virginia Water and ran to Waterloo via Surbiton. The 15:39 from Reading also reversed at Virginia Water and ran via Surbiton.

Thursday 14 December: A person was struck by an empty train at Folkestone Central about 13:30, resulting in the line being closed for over an hour.

Friday 15 December: There was no service between Streatham and Sutton via Wimbledon until the 08:49 from Sutton, because of a failed train blocking the line. There were no trains to or from Bognor Regis until after 07:00, because of a gas leak at the station, with consequent delays and cancellations for a further two hours. The line was blocked until about 08:00 after the 05:00 Dartford to Cannon Street was involved in a fatality between Plumstead and Woolwich Arsenal. Trains were diverted via Bexleyheath. The railway was closed at Winchester for about two hours during the afternoon after a person apparently jumped from a bridge. Several trains were diverted via Havant.

Saturday 16 December: There was an exceptionally disruptive bridge strike, when an articulated lorry became wedged under Catford Hill bridge, between Catford and Bellingham about 14:00. It could not be released until after 20:00 and meantime trains had to be diverted via Herne Hill. This was not the only problem caused by a road user. A car was driven onto the railway at West Barnes level crossing, between Raynes Park and Motspur Park about 19:15. It was after 22:00 before the vehicle was removed, partly because trains were stranded outside stations. Some passengers alighted before arrangements could be made to return trains wrong line to a platform.

Sunday 17 December:

A points failure at Farnham prevented trains running from Alton for two hours from 08:30. An axle counter failure at Havant caused delays and disruption for about two hours from 17:30.

Monday 18 December: A points failure at Crofton Road Junction, between Peckham Rye and Denmark Hill caused London Overground services to be cancelled until 07:45. A points failure at Tanners Hill Junction, St Johns, put the up fast line out of use for about an hour from 07:00. The line was closed for over two hours after the 13:10 from Haslemere was involved in a fatality between Guildford and Worplesdon. Trains were diverted via Cobham. There was yet another points failure in the evening, this time at Motspur Park. There were no trains to Chessington between the 19:17 and 20:47 from Waterloo.

Tuesday 19 December: The 05:10 Tonbridge to Mountfield gypsum train, hauled by 69005, slipped to a stand near High Brooms. It was able to proceed slowly after about half an hour. This resulted in significant delays to passenger services for several hours.

Thursday 21 December: A tamper failed on the up line at Sidcup shortly before an overnight possession was to be given up. A locomotive had to be summoned from Tonbridge to haul it to Hither Green, so there was no passenger service from Sidcup towards London until the 06:57 from Dartford. Trees were blown onto the line at Wokingham and between Ascot and Bagshot during the middle of the day. The 12:55 Horsham to Peterborough terminated at City Thameslink, because of a problem when attempting to switch to AC power. After a delay of about half an hour it continued on DC to Farringdon and terminated there. The 17:17 from Dorking was involved in a fatality at Mitcham Eastfields, resulting in lines being blocked until 20:00. The isolation of traction current affected the line via Tooting, as well as that via Mitcham Eastfields.

Friday 22 December: A points failure prevented use of the low level platforms at Portsmouth & Southsea throughout the day, resulting in trains being cancelled or terminating short of destination. There were no trains on the Sheerness branch after the 09:47 to Sittingbourne, because of a crew shortage.

Saturday 23 December: The up slow line at Pirbright Jn was closed all day, because of a broken rail. Alton trains were diverted via Guildford in the up direction or to and from Basingstoke. A track circuit failure resulted in there being very few trains between Newhaven Harbour and Seaford from the middle of the afternoon.

Sunday 24 December: Trees fell onto the line at Crowhurst during the morning and Canterbury East in the afternoon.

AROUND THE REGION

National Railway Heritage Awards: The restoration of Folkestone Harbour station by Folkestone Harbour Limited was judged the best entry in the 2023 National Railway Heritage Awards. Awards were also made for restoration of the frontage of Peckham Rye station and of Findlater's Corner at London Bridge. There were commendations for projects to renovate station buildings at Bishopstone, Eynsford and Hollingbourne and to relocate a turntable from Hither Green to Robertsbridge.

Peckham Rye: Planning permission has been granted for further improvements at Peckham Rye station. There will be a new concourse at street level, with new lifts and stairs to the platforms. There will be a new station entrance on Dovedale Court, the area between the viaducts to the rear of the building. Currently Peckham Rye is the busiest interchange on the national network that is not fully accessible.

Denmark Hill: Renovation of the former station master's house in Windsor Walk, on the north side of the railway, has been completed and the building is available for rent, possibly as a café.

Ticket Gates: Govia Thameslink Railway has completed a project to make all of its 710 ticket gates at 98 stations able to read tickets with barcodes. Almost half of tickets sold now have barcodes.

London Bridge: A Christmas concert, featuring the London Transport Choir, was held round the organ at London Bridge station on 18 December. This raised funds for the Railway Benefit Fund. The organ, located in a passage in the arches at the station, was originally at Whetstone United Reformed Church, and was relocated to London Bridge in 2022.

Streatham: The new lifts to the platforms came into use in December and the footbridge has been refurbished.

Selhurst: Brighton Electric Control Room has taken responsibility for most lines in South London that were previously controlled from Selhurst.

Surbiton: Network Rail in conjunction with its development partner, Solum Regeneration, proposes to replace the station car park on the former goods yard site at Surbiton with a multi-storey one, allowing blocks of flats to be built on most of the land. The project would include converting the station booking hall into a shop, café or restaurant. Solum was responsible for the developments at Epsom and Twickenham stations and are progressing the scheme at Guildford.

Woking: Monitoring equipment detected instability in the cutting slope on the down side of the main line about 1¼ miles west of Woking. Remedial working comprised provision of sheet steel piles to retain the slope. This was carried out between 6 and 10 December. There was a further problem on 3 December, when the piers of St John's footbridge between Woking and Brookwood were found to have subsided. A 20 mph speed restriction was imposed and the down slow line was blocked. The bridge was partly demolished on 6 December, when SWR was running a very limited strike service. Between 8 and 10 December both down lines were closed, principally for the piling work, but also to complete removal of the footbridge. Alton trains were diverted via Guildford. There was a severely restricted main line service, with down trains having to use the up fast line, which does not have bidirectional signalling, between Woking and Brookwood. Further piles were to be installed between 27 and 29 December.

Blackwater: The ground frame at Blackwater has been abolished. It is intended that the crossover, currently clipped out of use, will become power-operated from Basingstoke ROC when Wokingham signal box is abolished.

Weymouth: Class 444 units have been banned from using platform 1 at Weymouth, the five-coach one on the west side of the station. A recently installed gate and anti-trespass matting at the north end of the platform prevent access to a class 444 cab.

CREDITS: Colin Duff, John Goodrich, Stuart Hicks