

FROM THE PAST ... AN OCCASIONAL SERIES

1921

On 30 January on the Great Northern & City Line, a new signal cabin opened at Drayton Park at the north end of station between the Down line and sidings. The existing signal box, which was just south of the station and just inside the tunnel, and the ground frame in the depot yard were taken out of use. Another new signal cabin opened on 13 February, but this was provided by the LNWR just north of Queen's Park north shed. This was Queen's Park No.3 signal box, between the Down and Up electric lines just north of the LNWR/Bakerloo junction. A crossover between Down and Up electric lines north of the signal box was also provided. Current rails from junction on LNWR electric lines were extended through the outside (LNWR) platforms of Queen's Park station for about 800 yards from the junction. The line was blocked (towards Euston) at that point. At an unknown date the following month, a footbridge was provided by the LNWR for staff entering and leaving Croxley Green Depot during flooding. Access was via a wicket gate in Wiggenshall Road. (As so often happens, changes made to procedures on the railway are the result of a previous incident – in this case a previous flood!).

On the Metropolitan Railway, the installation of Fog Repeating signals between Baker Street and Harrow-on-the-Hill was completed on 31 March. The same date was the beginning of another Coal Strike but this one lasted over three months until 4 July and had a devastating effect on the Underground's operations. Not only were services reduced but operating hours were reduced with many stations closed or part-closed on Sundays.

Back in January, two of the four water-hydraulic lifts on the Great Northern & City at Finsbury Park were taken out of service. On 24 April, a new double interchange stairway was opened in their place. The remaining pair of GN&C lifts were taken out of service the following day – the fact that the lifts were slow and there was only a short distance travelled (28ft) it was probably quicker for passengers to use the stairs between the platforms and the main line interchange subway.

From 5 June, three additional stabling sidings were provided at Parsons Green. These were on the eastbound side east of the station and comprised one single length siding and one double-length siding. They were numbered 5/6/7 sidings – now 25, 26 and 27 sidings. On 1 July the Metropolitan Railway acquired the management of the East London Line.

The Government returned control of the railways from midnight on 15 August.

On 21 August, new automatic signalling was commissioned between Euston and Angel both roads. The intermediate signal cabin at Weston Street (between Angel and King's Cross) was closed. Even today, the careful traveller will realise where Weston Street signal cabin was, as it was built on the 'hump' principle, much like most of the tube stations. It has been suggested that the remains of the signal frame at Weston Street was left in place and later installed at Angel, when that reopened after reconstruction.

A number of stations reopened at 09.30 on Sundays from 4 September. These were St. Mary's, West Brompton, Park Royal, Down Street, South Kentish Town, South Acton, Gillespie Road, Chancery Lane, Clapham Road, Kennington and City Road. Also, stations reopened on Sundays from 09.30 instead of 15.00 were Maida Vale, Caledonian Road and Goodge Street. Covent Garden, Cannon Street, Aldwych and York Road remained closed on Sundays.

The following month on 17 October, the booking office at Aldwych was closed and replaced by tickets issued by the liftman inside the lift. The left luggage office at Aldwych was also closed. Still on ticketing matters, the very first 'passimeter' ticket office opened at Kilburn Park on 16 December. (These were the free-standing offices in the ticket hall, rather than the traditional 'wall' office, which could also be used for ticket collection).

On 26 November, Quainton Road Junction signal box closed at the end of traffic. From then on, the points were worked from Quainton Road station signal box. (The box reopened 08.09.22).

1922

The resignalling of the City & South London Railway was completed on 1 January with the section Stockwell – Clapham Common commissioned. From the same date the station premises at Moorgate C&SLR was changed from "69/71 Finsbury Pavement" to "139/141 Moorgate". Covent Garden station reopened on Sundays for Opera traffic at 18.00 from 8 January

In March, telephone lines were provided in each lift shaft at Aldwych for direct communication between the liftman and the Traffic Controller, requiring a telephone handset to be clipped onto two bare telephone wires which were provided in each lift shaft.

Changes to stations and train services included East Acton station remaining open for some 25 minutes later from 10 April, while from 16 April, Covent Garden closed throughout on Sundays, having reopened for Opera traffic only just three months before. On the North London Line, the Broad Street – Kew Bridge service became weekday peaks only in May, with a shuttle between Acton Central and Kew Bridge at other times.

On 12 June the first sod was cut for the Golders Green – Edgware extension at Highfield Avenue. On 1 July, “The Rule of the Footpath” was introduced on the Underground and was promoted with signage at all stations on all lines, for people to “walk on the left”. (The idea was “quietly dropped” later in the same month!). The following day, a limited service was re-introduced on Sundays between Aylesbury and Verney Junction.

The L&NWR DC electric service from Watford Junction to Euston and Broad Street via Queen’s Park was finally completed on 10 July. Previously closed Loudoun Road station was reopened and renamed South Hampstead. Chalk Farm (renamed Primrose Hill) and Kilburn & Maida Vale (Kilburn High Road) also reopened. Kensal Green was used by LNWR trains for the first time. Carpenders Park was also served by LNWR trains for the first time, hitherto having a limited Bakerloo Line service. Willesden Junction – Mitre Bridge sheds and Colne Junction – Croxley Green Junction were electrified. The formal opening was three days previously. (The LNWR Croxley Green branch was electrified with services beginning on 30 October. This was normally a shuttle service to/from Watford Junction but with Euston/Broad Street – Croxley Green trains via Colne Junction curve in rush hours).

Things were gathering pace on the future reconstruction of the City & South London Railway. Borough station closed at the end of traffic on 16 July to become a working site, while in August, facing points were installed north of Borough on the northbound to connect with what was known as “King William Street Siding” – some withdrawn trains were stored here after the line closed for reconstruction, pending their disposal. With the line north of Moorgate closed after traffic on 8 August, a facing crossover was commissioned south of Moorgate on the northbound line the following day to enable both platforms to be used for reversing.

On 17 October the ticket office at Aldwych closed, with tickets being issued in the lifts. Pending the opening of Acton Works, on 5 November, a connection between the main tracks at Acton Town (westbound and middle platform) and Acton Works was commissioned. On 27 November seven-car trains were introduced on the CLR’s Ealing service. Because of the platform curvatures, the middle doors of motor cars on Ealing Stock were not to be opened at Bank (eastbound), Wood Lane (loop and westbound Ealing) and at East Acton (both).

In December, current rails in Queen’s Park South Shed were extended at the north end to prevent trains being stranded on gaps. The extensions were controlled by switches in boxes fixed each side of the shed.

From 17 December, ‘lock and block’ working ended Westbourne Park – Hammersmith H&C and automatic signalling commissioned Westbourne Park – Hammersmith. Shepherd’s Bush signal box was thus closed but Ladbroke Grove box was retained for emergencies only. On the Metropolitan Railway, a subway was opened on 30 December at the north end of Neasden station. 31 December was the last day of the old Railway Companies before Grouping.

1923

On 1 January the ‘big four’ railway companies were created – LNER, LMSR, GWR and SR. The GWR-owned Hammersmith & City rolling stock and the car sheds at Hammersmith were purchased by the Metropolitan Railway and Acton Overhaul Works was officially opened. On the Central London, the ‘current on line’ gap indicator lamps at Post Office and Bond Street were abolished and replaced by LER standard Rail Gap Indicators. Those at Notting Hill Gate and Marble Arch followed suit 25 February.

On 18 February, the crossover between the Up and Down electric line north of Harrow & Wealdstone was decommissioned. It was replaced by a centre siding in April. On the District Railway a new crossover at Heston Hounslow (Hounslow Central) was commissioned, controlled from a new signal

cabin at the west end of the station on the Down side. On 17 March the crossover at Hounslow Town (Hounslow East) was abolished and the area converted to automatic signalling.

A new entrance to Baker Street station from the Marylebone Road was opened on 22 April. With the opening of Wembley Stadium on 24 April, an additional platform was provided at Wembley Park from 28 April. Signalling improvements between Baker Street and Wembley Park were made from 10 May and a new station was opened at Northwick Park & Kenton on 28 June.

Kennington on the C&SLR closed on 1 June in connection with the reconstruction of the line and from 3 July contractors' sidings were installed on the site of the platforms. In August work began to construct the north-south crossover at Portland Place North (between Oval and Stockwell). There were no Sunday trains on the C&SLR from 7 October (last day of Sunday service was 30 September) and on that day a six-car test train with locomotives at each end operated, fitted with experimental tripcocks. From 22 October the remaining C&SLR service Clapham Common – Moorgate operated with single line working on northbound line between Portland Place and Stockwell. The CSLR was closed completely at the end of traffic on 28 November, following subsidence the previous evening, when shuttle services were set up. In December, Elephant & Castle C&SLR top level station, closed after the line was closed, reopened to relieve the Bakerloo Line station booking office. With the closure of the C&SLR, alterations were made to signalling and track:

- Removal of scissors crossover south of Moorgate.
- Points at London Bridge remain but controlled from a temporary ground frame in the tunnel at the south end of the station.
- Existing pointwork north of Borough for King William Street siding remains.
- Existing pointwork on both roads at Borough station remain.
- No change to the operation of signalling and points at Elephant & Castle (i.e. Down line to siding by signal box and Up line to siding via Annett's Key).
- Crossovers in Kennington platforms to be worked as at present.
- South Island Place crossover to be worked by 'plungers'.
- Stockwell to remain unchanged except that starting signals will remain at danger.
- Clapham Common to be worked by the signal box with fixed red lights provided.

Following the introduction of seven-car trains on the Central London Railway's Ealing service at rush hours in November, seven-car trains were abolished on Saturdays from 30 June. North Acton and West Acton stations opened on 5 November.

On 12 November, a new southbound platform opened at Golders Green, giving one northbound and one middle platform (both double-sided) and new single-sided southbound platform (formerly No.2 siding). The shunting neck was extended into a newly-bored section of tube tunnel on adjacent to southbound line because of the future seven-car trains. This was the first use of long-range outdoor colour light signals (G4^B, G34 and G35). One week later was the public opening of the extension Golders Green – Hendon Central at 15.00. A special opening train conveyed guests 11.30 ex-Charing Cross to Brent (11.51 to 12.10) and Hendon Central (12.12 to 12.32), thence to Golders Green arrive 12.36.

Tripcock testers were commissioned on both lines at Piccadilly Circus (Bakerloo), Strand southbound and Marble Arch both roads on 9 November. On the Metropolitan Railway, tripcock testers were also commissioned at Euston Square on both roads. A new station opened at Hillingdon (Swakeleys) on 10 December and at the end of the year, official construction began of the Morden extension at Nightingale Lane (Clapham South).

1924

On 1 January, the maintenance of signals, buildings and track on East London Railway were taken over by the Metropolitan Railway from the Southern Railway. The first stage of Hampstead Line resignalling took place between Camden Town and Highgate on the northbound¹ on 26 January.

¹ 26.01.24: Camden Town – Highgate northbound
 30.03.24: Highgate and Chalk Farm – Camden Town southbound.
 03.04.24: Belsize Park – Chalk Farm southbound.
 13.04.24: Hampstead – Belsize Park southbound.
 04.05.24: Golders Green – Hampstead southbound.

With the Hampstead Railway terminating at Hendon Central, work was continuing on the extension to Edgware and in February the southbound track was extended northwards into the tunnel. The same applied to the other track the following month. Also during February, a siding for 'muck train' working was provided on the site of the southbound platform at Oval. It was controlled by handworked points and protected by fixed red lights.

Reconstruction of the C&SLR continued apace, as did the construction of the extension north of Euston to Camden Town. On 2 March, the northbound junction at Camden Town for the Golders Green branch was moved 700ft south and a new northbound loop commissioned for Golders Green trains. The following week from 9 March, the southbound trailing junction at Camden Town was moved 670ft south and southbound trains ex-Highgate began using the new southbound loop. From the same date, for engineers' trains, single line working between South Island Place and Stockwell was transferred from the northbound to the southbound road and crossover arrangements at South Island Place changed in consequence.

At Baker Street, a canopy was provided over the approach road and an extension made to the frontage on 17 March.

The extension between Camden Town and Euston (C&SLR) was opened on 20 April, along with the reconstructed line between Euston and Moorgate. City Road station remained closed as the passenger numbers did not justify the expense of its enlargement and rebuilding. The siding lengths available at Euston and Angel were 348ft (sufficient for one train) and 672ft (two trains) respectively.

The British Empire Exhibition at Wembley opened on 23 April, following the rebuilding of Wembley Park station, completed on 2 February. The Great Central Railway's Wembley Exhibition station on the one-way loop also reopened. (The exhibition, station and loop closed on 1 November). A new substation at Willesden Green was commissioned by the Metropolitan Railway on 23 May.

Three new escalators replaced five lifts at Bank on the Central London from 7 May with one of the old lift shafts being fitted with stairs for CLR/C&SLR interchange. The middle southbound line south of Golders Green was taken out of use on 19 May and two new middle sidings were commissioned on 25 May.

A strike by Lots Road power station workers began at midnight on 4 June. South Kentish Town station was closed at the forenoon of 5 June because of a "shortage of electric power". Mornington Crescent station was also closed. Normal Underground services resumed on 14 June but with South Kentish Town and Mornington Crescent stations remaining closed. The latter reopened on 2 July, but South Kentish Town remained closed on a permanent basis.

Two new escalators to the C&SLR were commissioned at Moorgate on 3 July following the reconstruction of the station.

A new entrance to Victoria MDR station in Terminus Place was opened in August and new staircase provided at the east end of the westbound platform. Trial operations between Hendon Central and Edgware began on 9 August with public opening on 18 August, except for Burnt Oak station, which opened on Mondays to Saturdays from 27 October.

From the following month, the twin tunnels north of Hendon Central, hitherto known as 'The Burroughs' (Tunnels), were renamed 'Hendon Tunnels'.

On 5 October, Stockwell C&SLR signal cabin was decommissioned and all points in the area converted to manual operation. Automatic signalling replaced manual signalling between Harrow South Junction and Pinner/Rayners Lane from 19 October, followed by Pinner – Rickmansworth on 13 December.

Two new escalators replaced the lifts at Shepherd's Bush on the Central London Railway from 5 November.

On 1 December the reconstructed C&SLR reopened between Moorgate and Clapham Common except for Borough and Kennington stations, which remained closed as working sites. The C&SLR/SR subway at London Bridge also remained closed. It was then decreed that Edgware/Highgate via the City was to be known as the "City Line" and Edgware/Highgate – Charing Cross to be known as "Hampstead

06.07.24: Hampstead – Golders Green northbound.

14.09.24: Belsize Park – Hampstead northbound.

28.09.24: Chalk Farm – Belsize Park northbound.

05.10.24: Camden Town – Chalk Farm northbound.

Line”, both collectively to be known as the “Hampstead & City Line”. Mornington Crescent station was from then on to be served only by Highgate trains.

1925

Previously, on 27 December 1924, Edgware depot roads were designated 1-4 (shed) and 5-8 (outside roads), but in January 1925 the tracks were redesignated as follows: 1-2 (platform roads), 3-6 (shed roads) and 7-10 (outside siding roads). On 4 January, the two loop tracks with the associated signalling was commissioned at Brent for overtaking and non-stopping services. The following day on the Metropolitan Railway, electrification was extended from Harrow-on-the-Hill to Rickmansworth. Changes between electric and steam locos took place at Rickmansworth instead of Harrow from then. Following the provision of escalators at Shepherd’s Bush CLR, an enlarged booking hall was completed and a passimeter ticket office provided.

The C&SLR/Southern Railway subway at London Bridge reopened on 9 February, while the reopening of Borough station followed on 23 February. The last station to reopen, Kennington, did so on 6 July (but still only for C&SLR services). The rebuilding of Old Street station was completed on 19 August, with two new escalators replacing lifts.

The mechanical signalling at Ealing Common was replaced by power signalling from 10 March and from 10 May took over control of Hanger Lane Junction signalling, with that signal box closing. On 1 April, St. John’s Wood Road on the Metropolitan was renamed St. John’s Wood and the rebuilding of that station was completed on 30 June.

Further track rearrangement took place at Golders Green on 12 April, with a realigned northbound line between the tunnel mouth and the signal cabin at the south end of the station. A new northbound ‘loop’ road was commissioned on 26 April and an additional shunting neck on 16 June. In July, the tracks at Golders Green were renumbered as follows:

Renumbering of roads at Golders Green (west to east):

- Northbound
- Northbound loop
- No.1 siding
- No.2 siding
- Southbound
- No.4 siding
- No.6 road shunting neck (into new tunnel extension)
- No.7 road shunting neck (newly commissioned)

From the new timetable of 4 May, ten-car train working was abolished on the District Railway. The reconstruction of Bank station was declared as complete on 5 May, while the second season of the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley began on 9 May, which included the reopening of the GCR loop and Wembley Exhibition station.

When the Central London Railway opened to Liverpool Street in 1912, two escalators were initially provided in single shafts between platform level and the LNER station. A third shaft was also provided with stairs and from 19 May 1925, a third escalator went into service in the former stairs shaft.

Although opened in 1910 to both passenger and freight, it wasn’t until June 1925 that the sidings at Moor Park were used regularly for freight.

On 16 August an extended and combined Central London and Bakerloo ticket hall opened at Oxford Circus. Next door at Tottenham Court Road, the upper flight of three new escalators came into use on 29 September.

On the Metropolitan, the Uxbridge branch flyunder north of Harrow-on-the-Hill opened on 14 September and additional lines provided between Harrow-on-the-Hill and Harrow North Junction. The rebuilding of Willesden Green station was completed on 29 September. On 23 October the Metropolitan Railway Directors inspected the newly built Watford branch with the formal opening on 31 October and public opening on 2 November. Services were provided by the Met and GCR along with a Met. shuttle service between Rickmansworth and Watford.

On 1 November, Acton LMS station was renamed Acton Central, presumably to avoid confusion with the GWR’s Acton station (which stayed with that name until it became Acton Main Line in 1949). There were also five further ‘Acton’ stations serving the Underground – Town, North, South, East and West. On the same date, track and signalling alterations were made at Rayners Lane. The crossover between the Up and Down roads in the platforms was abolished and replaced by new slip points from the Down road to the Up South Harrow line east of station and a new crossover from the Down road to the Up

(Met.) east of the new slip points. The following day, a new siding with an inspection pit (No.15) was commissioned on the District at Cromwell Curve Depot.

1926

A shortage of stock on the LMS electric services resulted in a steam push-pull train deputising for one working on Willesden – Earl's Court service on an 'as required' basis (which continued until 15.01.27).

Work continued on the extension of the C&SLR towards Morden and of the Hampstead towards Kennington. From 24 January, the stabling of trains in the southbound siding at Clapham Common was changed to stable in the extended northbound siding. A fixed red light and buffer stop was provided 60 yards north of the future Nightingale Lane (Clapham South) station. From the same date, the Charing Cross loop was taken of use from the end of traffic. Highgate trains then (generally) terminated in the southbound platform at Strand and Edgware line trains operated single line from/to Strand northbound platform and Charing Cross northbound platform, which was temporarily resignalled for two-way working.

On 1 February the rebuilt station at Tottenham Court Road was opened and two new escalators were provided to and from the Hampstead Line. The joint station at Old Street (GN&CR and C&SLR) was taken over by the Hampstead & City Line management in February.

On the District Railway, two sidings were given inspection pits at Parsons Green. No.4 was out of use from 15.12.25 to 18.02.26 and No.3 from 18.02.26 until 05.04.26. (These two sidings were renumbered 24 and 23 respectively in 1960).

Part electrification of the City Widened Lines took place from 15 March. The Up (eastbound) line from King's Cross Metropolitan Junction to Moorgate and the Down (westbound) line from Moorgate to Farringdon was electrified, to provide some relief for trains working into the City and those terminating at Moorgate. The terminus roads at Moorgate were also enlarged.

The coal strike began on 1 May and two days later became a General Strike. Services were reduced and some stations were closed. This led to the permanent withdrawal of LNER trains to Watford (Met.) apart from occasional specials and excursions. The General Strike ended on 14 May and the Underground stations hitherto closed because of it reopened, except for York Road and Brompton Road. However, the Metropolitan's East London Line didn't reopen until 17 May. In preparation for the reconstruction of the Edgware Road (Met.) area, all points and connections at Edgware Road were decommissioned from 23 May. One week later, the Down line was realigned around the back of the temporary island platform and the Up line realigned north of the temporary island platform. Praed Junction signal box closed on 10 October with the signals in the area controlled from the new signal cabin at Edgware Road station. The resignalling was completed at Edgware Road on 1 November. The new layout comprised four platforms and two sidings with new signalling from the new signal cabin. The District Railway service was extended from High Street Kensington to Edgware Road and in consequence the Metropolitan worked the Inner Circle daily with some MDR workings on Sundays.

In the meanwhile, the hitherto open-air sidings at Wembley Park were given covered accommodation with the new shed available from 3 May. The Metropolitan Railway had purchased government surplus sheds from Hereford, which enabled protection to be given to the nine seven-car stabling sidings.

The rebuilding of stations continued and completed were Oval, Stockwell and Clapham North (29 May) and Aldgate (10 June). In August, two lifts at Oxford Circus were available to relieve congestion. The lifts had two upper landings – street level for exiting and ticket hall level for entry. The lifts had car control only, and no landing control.

On 29 August a new signal cabin was opened at Kennington with control only for the City Line (the Charing Cross extension was then still under construction). However, on 13 September, the two extensions opened (Charing Cross – Kennington and Clapham Common to Morden except Balham) and the Charing Cross branch signalling commissioned at Kennington. (In Traffic Notice 36/26, it states that there is "passenger dissatisfaction about lack of through trains between Morden and Charing Cross branch which will be addressed as soon as possible"). Balham station opened to the public on 6 December.

York Road and Brompton Road stations reopened on weekdays only from 4 October, but with restricted hours (06.00 to 23.00 and 07.45 to end of traffic respectively).

From 10 October, a number of locations had fixed red lights installed about 50ft into the tunnel from the headwall to avoid the possibility of a reversing train proceeding on the wrong line. This must have been done in connection with a train which reversed incorrectly, pre-dating a similar incident at King's Cross on the Piccadilly Line 66 years hence. The locations were:

PICCADILLY LINE

Hyde Park Corner – west end of eastbound.

Covent Garden – west end of eastbound.

York Road – west end of eastbound.

BAKERLOO LINE

Paddington – south end of northbound.

Lambeth North – south end of northbound.

HAMPSTEAD & CITY

Hampstead – south end of northbound.

Mornington Crescent – south end of northbound.

Moorgate Street – south end of northbound C&SLR.

London Bridge – north end of southbound.

Stockwell – south end of northbound.

CENTRAL LONDON

Bank – west end of eastbound CLR.

British Museum – east end of westbound.

Marble Arch – east end of westbound.

Queen's Road – west end of eastbound.

Shepherd's Bush – west end of eastbound CLR.

From 28 November Hounslow Central – Hounslow West became double-tracked with three platforms intended at the terminus. However, only one platform (No.1) was available until 11 December, when platforms 2 and 3 were commissioned and platform 1 taken out of use for reconstruction.