

SEPTEMBER 2010 – AN UNUSUAL MONTH

September 2010 was a rather unusual month, not only for what should have happened that didn't, but also for what shouldn't have happened, did! Taking the former category first there should have been special trains operating for the Rickmansworth Canal Festival on Sunday 12 September, in the form of Sarah Siddons (and coaches) and the LT Museum's 1938 Tube Stock. Both of these had defects that couldn't be rectified in time.

The other non-event was the apparent cancellation of the 'farewell' celebrations to the class 313 EMUs on London Overground, the last two units remaining being 313.021 and 313.023. These trains had been absent from the Euston – Watford service for some weeks but had returned to the North London Line to cover for the new class 378's conversion from three- to four-car units, pending completion of platform lengthening¹ to four cars. However, total four-car operation on the NLL isn't expected to be complete until the end of the year, but once two four-car trains became available (from 14 September 2010) the two class 313s would be withdrawn. To that end one class 313 was to be scheduled in service on Friday 17 September and would finish by working the 23.42 Stratford to Camden Road. From there it was planned to run it in additional passenger (and enthusiast!) service via Primrose Hill to Willesden Junction with photo stops on the way, including an 'old' and 'new' side by side photo opportunity at Willesden Junction. This event was cancelled and thus it is believed that the class 313 trains passed into oblivion from London Overground without any proper ceremony – unless of course you know different!

We will now turn to events that should not have happened, but did. The first of these was the strike by the RMT and TSSA unions over the proposed 800 job losses, mostly involving station and ticket office staff, along with a number of Duty Managers. Irrespective of the promise of "no compulsory redundancies" (*not many firms would offer that these days! – Ed.*) the 24-hour strike went ahead from 21.00 on Monday 6 September until the same time the following day. But of course the disruption lasted longer than the 24 hours, effectively being felt during Monday afternoon and continuing until the close of traffic on Tuesday. During this period, many stations were closed, some lines ran a much reduced service, and some sections didn't run at all. However, the Northern Line probably operated the best of all, serving all of its destinations, presumably because many of its train staff belonged to the union ASLEF, who were not involved in the dispute, even though several stations were closed.

MONDAY 6 SEPTEMBER LINE SUMMARY

BAKERLOO – Queen's Park – Harrow suspended from 17.00 with 19 trains Queen's Park – Elephant & Castle. Service reduced to 15 trains from 19.30 and 9 trains for the last hour of service. Kilburn Park, Regent's Park and Lambeth North closed from 22.35.

CENTRAL – Eight trains cancelled for the evening peak. Central area service suspended from 22.00 because of station closures but services on the branches continued until around 00.30. 17 Central Line-served stations were closed late evening.

DISTRICT – The strike began to take effect from mid-afternoon and for the evening peak 27 trains were cancelled. For the last hour of service just 10 trains were running.

JUBILEE – Relatively unscathed until the night staff booking-on time, with five trains cancelled and six stations closed by midnight.

METROPOLITAN – Five trains cancelled during the evening but a total suspension from 23.00 because of insufficient night signalling staff to maintain a service.

CIRCLE/H&C – Strike action began early with 11 trains cancelled for the evening peak, 16 mid-evening and so service after 23.00.

NORTHERN – Normal service but 11 stations closed late evening because of a lack of night staff.

PICCADILLY – Normal service but 7 stations closed approaching the close of traffic.

¹ This was really a "re-lengthening" (of platforms) because the North London Line platforms could originally accommodate six-car trains until rationalisation in the 1960s, which resulted in a maximum of three-car trains only, with the extra space becoming disused and often derelict.

VICTORIA – Believed to be normal service with a handful of stations closed.

TUESDAY 7 SEPTEMBER SUMMARY

BAKERLOO – Suspended north of Queen's Park all day. 5 trains from start increasing to 16/17 trains during the day, reducing to 12 trains mid/late evening. Various 7 or 8 stations closed throughout the day.

CENTRAL – No service all day Leytonstone – White City, with very reduced shuttle services at each end of the line. Maximum of 15 trains in service.

DISTRICT – An all-day Wimbledon – Barking service with a maximum 32 trains operated. From just after 15.00 an Ealing – High Street Kensington shuttle service was introduced, taking the trains in service up to 40. This latter service also included the use of C Stock as seen (*right*) at Earl's Court. This arrangement continued until the close of traffic but the number of trains in service had reduced to 24 by midnight.



Photo: Julian Gajewski

28 District Line stations were closed until late afternoon, which then reduced to an average of 15.

JUBILEE – A Stanmore – Finchley Road service operated all day while from 06.30 a Waterloo – Stratford service was provided, albeit both in limited form.

METROPOLITAN – This began with a reduced service but with Northwood – Watford suspended until 08.00. The Chesham shuttle operated from 07.00 (no through peak service) once points at Chalfont had been secured and the train 'locked in' on the single line. No service operated between Baker Street and Aldgate. The main service operated generally every 15 minutes Baker Street – Uxbridge/Watford and 30 minutes Baker Street – Amersham. There appears to have been little or no problems with station closures.

CIRCLE/H&C – Operated Hammersmith – Edgware Road from 08.00, which was extended to Baker Street from 08.30, and continued as such until just after midnight. Station closures averaged 20 until late morning then 15 until the early evening. Barbican and Paddington were the last to open when the night staff reported for duty.

NORTHERN – A reduced service operated to all destinations, with 55 trains (out of 91) in the morning peak and 40 trains in the evening peak. The trains in service during the midday period varied between 33 and 45 out of the normal 72. Station closures averaged 12 during the day, but with 18 in the early morning.

PICCADILLY – A very limited service operated as follows:

- Cockfosters – Arnos Grove from start of traffic.
- Acton Town – Hammersmith shuttle from 07.45.
- Turnham Green served from 09.15 until the District Line service began in the afternoon.
- East end shuttle Arnos Grove to King's Cross from 07.45, separate to that between Cockfosters and Arnos Grove.
- Through service Cockfosters – King's Cross from 09.00.
- West end service changed at 17.00 to serve Hammersmith – Acton Town – Northfields – Hounslow East – Heathrow T123, with South Ealing and Boston Manor opening later.

VICTORIA – Seven Sisters – Victoria from 07.45, extended to Walthamstow until 14.30, then Seven Sisters – Victoria for the rest of the day.

WATERLOO & CITY – 3 trains 08.00 to 09.30, 2 trains until 14.40, no service until 16.00, 2 trains to 17.00, 3 trains to 19.15 then 2 trains thereafter.



One of the results of the strike day on Tuesday 7 September was the operation of three-vehicle trains on the Docklands Light Railway between Stratford and Canary Wharf but on that day only, following some test runs having taken place on the previous Sunday afternoon. One such formation is seen at Bow Church heading south for Canary Wharf (*Above*) with B.92 vehicle 85 leading – the photographer is standing on the 'lengthened' platform section. The three units coupled together are seen (*Left*).

Both photos: Kim Rennie

The other incident that should not have happened but did, was on Wednesday 8 September and involved Hammersmith & City Line train 227 departing from Plaistow bay platform at 08.20, which continued along the eastbound line (instead of crossing over to the westbound line) heading towards an eastbound train. The train was not a scheduled Plaistow reverser and it is assumed it must have been running late eastbound and was being reversed for it to be on time for its westbound trip.

These kinds of incidents are not new. They have happened before, for example –

- Piccadilly Circus (Bakerloo) in 1938 Stock days when a southbound train reversed and started to proceed northbound on the southbound line. The headlights of a southbound train standing at the Piccadilly Circus southbound home signal alerted the motorman of the northbound train (as he was then) that “something was wrong”. Previously, on arrival at Piccadilly Circus he had stopped short of the 7-car stopping mark, changed ends and, having failed to check the starting signal (which was out of view behind him in the then leading cab and the trainstop was behind what was then the leading bogie) proceeded on the wrong line. Quite why the guard didn't check the

starting signal using the platform repeater has been lost in the mists of time, for it was he who closed the doors and gave the bell to start.

- One New Year's Day morning in the late-1990s a C Stock Circle Line train with a defect was to be detrained and reversed inner rail to outer rail at High Street Kensington, to return to Hammersmith depot via Edgware Road. This involved a shunt 'south' of the station, but the Train Operator changed ends in the platform after detraining and proceed towards a Wimbledon-bound District Line train which was standing at the home signal. Fortunately, the train stopped short of it and a head-on collision was avoided.
- Also in the 1990s, a westbound Piccadilly Line train, told to reverse west to east at King's Cross, did so in the westbound platform instead of shunting west of the station and reversing across the crossover. Again and fortunately, the train stopped short of a westbound train which was standing at the westbound home signal and a head-on collision was avoided.
- More recently, the Train Operator of a southbound Northern Line train, believed to have originated from Mill Hill East and reversing south to north at Finchley Central (in platform 3 and via the south siding) changed ends in the platform and departed northbound on the southbound line towards a train standing at the home signal from the Barnet branch. Perhaps the Train Operator thought he/she was in platform No.1 (where the doors are on the same side) where reversing north to south on a trip from Mill Hill East would mean changing ends in the platform.

All of the trains in these incidents, including the latest on 8 September, stopped before a head-on collision occurred, this last incident being a considerable distance away from the approaching eastbound train. This incident, however, was an exception to what had gone before, in that it was *not* a Train Operator's error as such. It was different in that the train was actually signalled onto the wrong track, reportedly as a result of a wiring error² following recent work having taken place at Plaistow in connection with the future centre siding/loop road east of West Ham.

It is believed that the Train Operator proceeded correctly after receiving a green signal (FC4) in the bay platform. Points 6^A and 6^B (between the bay platform and the eastbound line) were correctly set in the 'reverse' position, as should have been points 7^A and 7^B between the east- and westbound line – but they were not. The fact that these points were laying in the 'normal' position allowed train 227 to proceed on the wrong line towards an on-coming eastbound train, which was in the eastbound platform at West Ham when train 227 stopped. There seems to be some doubt and confusion as to whether the Train Operator of train 227 stopped the train, or whether it was back-tripped on the home signal FC11, thus bringing it to a stand. If the latter, it begs the question as to how far the train might have continued before it stopped on the wrong line. In either event, the rear of train 227 was by 7^B points, the leading car at the west end having continued a train's length wrong line beyond them.

Whether the RIAB will be investigating this incident remains to be seen, but as this issue closed for press there was no indication on their website that they were going to do so – we wait and see.

² Shades of Charing Cross District Line in 1938, when LT were not so lucky – six passengers were killed when two trains collided because of incorrect wiring when a signal showed 'clear' behind a train. Such procedures were then tightened but the incident led to a procedure being taught in the "Rules & Regulations" course at the Training Centre, then at Lambeth, later at White City, which was a "Signal Failure in the Clear". It is not known if such things are taught today.