

# UNDERGROUND ITEMS FROM THE TELEVISION AN OCCASIONAL SERIES

by Paul Creswell

## THE TUBE

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The review for the first two programmes (on Mondays 20 and 27 February 2012) appeared in the previous issue of *Underground News* on pages 309-313.

### MONDAY 5 MARCH 2012 (3 OF 6)

This programme covered the operational management of the system, suicides, and special events.

Since some readers may not be keen to read about suicides, this section is dealt with first. If you wish to skip it, please start again at the intermittent horizontal line, six paragraphs hence.

Northern Line driver Peter Kappa is, as well as being a driver, a 'trauma counsellor' for his colleagues. We followed an incident on the Northern Line, where a woman fell in front of a train and was trapped for a time. (If subsequent views shown were actually relevant, it would have been at Bank). A female Customer Services Assistant was first to reach the victim and attempted to keep her alive and comfort her. She was trapped by her lower torso and her head was over the platform edge, but she was able to speak. Peter spoke to her (the Customer Services Assistant) and also to the driver involved. He mentioned that some drivers do not wish to be counselled, but there is then the risk that their feelings might surface elsewhere -they may 'take it out' on their families, or suffer many nightmares re-living the incident. It can ruin lives. One driver on the Central Line took the view that "if they want to jump, let them jump!", but, if it does happen, you will feel like a murderer. Peter Kappa told us that he had never actually had a successful 'jump' when he was driving, but two people had attempted it. The woman died of her injuries about a week later.

Towards the end of the programme, there was a fatality at Euston, which 'shut down' the Victoria Line. Rather strangely, in the platform views shown, the 'bullseyes' were 'ghosted', presumably so that the station could not be identified by the programme's viewers. Now your reviewer puzzles as to why this was done – there are only sixteen stations on the Victoria Line anyway and the 'top level' pictures clearly showed the main line station at Euston! It was also most clearly a very short station name, ruling out many of the other fifteen candidates!

The Emergency Response Unit (E.R.U.) were in attendance and two members of the unit, Tony Hatch and Paul McCarthy, provided us with some background. Paul told us that he had approached his first 'one under' with some fear and an adrenalin rush, but now it was just the adrenalin as he no longer feared attending such incidents..

The man involved at Euston was dead (presumably on impact with the train and/or the drop into the 'suicide pit'). The E.R.U. and Fire Brigade needed the power put on so as to move the train clear of the body, but it was already off to allow passengers stranded on other trains, between stations, to be escorted to various platforms. Eventually, traction current was restored and the train was then moved clear of the body. The E.R.U. produced gloves and a body bag and, with the assistance of some Fire Brigade staff, the body was removed from the track. Paul McCarthy told us that it was difficult to actually place your hands on a body, but you are no good to the team if you cannot do it. He also said that he had known a family friend who had committed suicide this way and he could visualise, much better than many people, the scene that his colleagues had to deal with at the time. You cannot really discuss your day's work with your family over the dinner table, particularly if a suicide was involved.

The driver involved, Tony Barratt, described the event as an 'occupational hazard'. He had seen the man jump and he seemed to 'float' across the front of the train and then drop down. He had detrained his passengers and was a little uncertain of what he should do beyond that. Most of the passengers (on the platform) seemed oblivious to what had happened. He had known drivers with 25 years service not to have had a 'one under', but others with much less service had known two or three.

Closed circuit television of the man involved was shown, as he seemed to 'prepare' for what he was about to do. (The actual 'jump' not being shown, naturally). Not only did the E.R.U. have to remove the body, but they had to clear the track of any residue, later giving the tools involved a good rinsing back at their base, some two hours after the incident. The body was eventually removed by the Coroner. Another (unidentified) member of the E.R.U. told us that you never get used to suicides, however many times you attend such incidents. He was sure there would be many more in the future!

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The programme commenced, not unnaturally, with the start of the working day. We joined driver Dylan Glenister (one of some 3,200 drivers) as he prepared his Piccadilly Line train for service at (we were told) 'Acton' depot! Your reviewer thinks it looked almost certainly (and logically as well) like Northfields depot. He enjoys his job, helping with 'the life flow of London'. He also felt that the Piccadilly Line was the best line! He particularly enjoyed emerging from the tunnel at Arnos Grove in the evening and seeing the brilliant sunsets that could sometimes be enjoyed at the east end of the line.

There are some four thousand incidents each year of someone being injured. Two thousand five hundred involve falls on stairs or escalators, five hundred are on platforms and some forty of the total are classified as 'serious'. The Network Operations Centre (N.O.C.) are at the heart of all responses to emergencies and incidents across the system's 274 stations and 526 trains. Andy Hogg, an N.O.C. duty manager related that the centre can go from 'abject boredom to organised chaos' in a moment.

For many incidents (generally of a more serious nature), the Emergency Response Unit are in attendance, travelling in a road vehicle equipped with all manner of emergency equipment, hopefully to be able to meet any situation they encounter on the track or at a station. We saw the Unit's squad checking the equipment at the start of their shift, much in the manner that television viewers will have seen practiced by ambulance and fire engine crews, before starting duty.

Viewers accompanied British Transport Police officer Kim Dyte (name not shown, so spelling assumed) and her colleague Mic. Scott, as they went about their various duties. They are two of seven hundred officers who are responsible for the main line railways as well as the Underground. Kim explained that she is always on the alert, as she never knows what people will do to her. At Oxford Circus, she explained that the station suffered from a lot of theft and also from pick-pocketing. She was seen stopping a quite tall man who had been using a child's ticket. A light had flashed on the barrier to indicate that a child ticket had been used.

At the B.T.P. London control room, we were shown how each officer was 'tracked' by global positioning satellites, so that their location was always shown on a map. This meant that they could be given routing guidance, in, for instance, a case of track trespass, which might mean they needed to be guided to the nearest access point, rather than a specific station.

We moved on to 'special' events', which, in this case, was the Notting Hill Carnival in west London. At the Network Operations Centre, Andy Hogg told us about station closures, stations becoming 'in' only or 'out' only for periods and also about the 'hot spare' (i.e. with a driver) trains kept ready at various locations to deal with sudden crowd surges. Driver John Pounder (Hammersmith and City Line) told us that the Carnival crowds are a lot larger than those in peak hours. Victoria Martin, a driver on the same line, told us that, whilst she makes announcements, many people do not listen as they are concentrating on their iPads, iPhones and other such 'electronic gizmos'.

At King's Cross/St. Pancras, B.T. Police officers watched the crowds arriving from Inter-City trains and carried out 'stop and search' (seeking weapons and drugs) in some cases. The individuals searched (where they were interviewed for the film) seemed happy that it was needed, though naturally objected to finding they themselves the subject of police attention! A 'knife arch' was available also, but not much in use as 'stop and search' was a better tactic. A sniffer dog was also present.

At Notting Hill Gate (Central Line), Andy George, Duty Reliability Manager, explained some of the techniques used to handle the large crowds. Sometimes, if a large number of people were leaving the platform, the next train would approach. Not wanting this train to add to the crowds trying to get off the platform, he would instruct the driver to enter the platform at slow speed, thus giving extra

time for the platform to empty and also making the platform much safer for the exiting crowds. At 18.00, the station ceased being 'exit only' and, once Andy had agreed matters with the police officers at street level, passengers were now also permitted to enter. Intending passengers had to dispose of any alcohol before entering the station. With some extra trains, the Central Line platforms were now trying to cope with some 21 trains per hour. Police activity became a bit more 'hard line' with the homeward bound crowds, so as to try to deter disturbances of any sort.

Extra staff were deployed to assist in handling such a popular event. This even included Howard Collins, the Chief Operating Officer of the Underground, who, apparently, carries out this duty every year. One imagines that his normal duties do not include being hugged by passing female revellers? It might have been worse, but we were not shown any men hugging him! He told us, incidentally, that he was raised in Trinidad.

There were forty-two arrests during the carnival and no 'serious' incidents, though whether that was just Underground related incidents or included the carnival streets as well was not made clear.

Animals also cause problems on the system. We followed the Emergency Response Unit as they dealt with a fox on the tunnel section of the Metropolitan Line. Frank Murphy (of the E.R.U.) arranged with the Line Controller to board a southbound train at Finchley Road (train 441 for the record) and to then proceed normally to Lords disused station, where its speed was reduced. Just after the 'hump' over the Regent's Canal they located the body of a (dead) fox that had assumedly been hit by a train. They recovered it from the track (taking the driver's train key for their protection whilst doing so) and 'bagged' it. The driver asked what they would do with it and he was told that it would be stored (with other deceased mammals) in a fridge until a proper disposal was arranged later. From the way the driver put the question, your reviewer imagined he expected the answer "cook it for the gang's lunch", (or similar). Foxes, badgers and even small deer have been encountered on such incident attendances. During the train's stop the driver advised his passengers of a slight delay, but not the reason! The shot of train 441 at (clearly) Finchley Road was followed by a very short shot of Baker Street – why? This idea (irrelevant shots interspersing relevant ones) was a continuous feature of each of the six programmes.

Ann O'Grady (Bakerloo Line driver) told us she had once dealt with a live swan, with its neck over the rail. She had 'shooed' it to one side, only to notice that it was also limping, with, presumably, an injured foot.

### **MONDAY 12 MARCH 2012 (4 OF 6)**

This programme covered the handling of passengers during service disruptions, enlargement of stations and introduction of new rolling stock.

A start was made at Victoria, where Carl Downer, Kerry Phillips and Natalie Rhule (Customer Service Assistants) and Lee Carter (Station Control Assistant) informed us of some of the difficulties of running the underground's busiest station. The peak lasts until about 09.30, when the end of that period sees the start of the 'tourist' period. More people seem to want to use the underground than it can carry. 'Fights' are sometimes seen between passengers as they push to be first in the crowd to get through a barrier – they seem to think that they are more important than anyone else. In ten years, passengers have increased by about a third and the station was not designed for the traffic now passing through. In this respect, Victoria has become a major problem.

We witnessed 'crowd control' in operation, in order to avoid the platforms becoming totally overcrowded. Passengers were held at the inward barriers, though some were clearly seen ignoring staffs requests to wait a while. An interviewed passenger said that it was frustrating never knowing if you will get anywhere when you arrive at a station.

At the Network Operations Centre, Andy Hogg (Duty Manager) told us that the system was under great pressure and that it carried more passengers each day than the whole of the national rail network.

Proving that overcrowding was not a new problem, archive film showed us the (then) new rolling stock for the Victoria Line which (with the line itself just recently opened) was intended to put paid to overcrowding along its route. Cobourg Street control room was also glimpsed.

David Waboso (Capital Programmes Director) mentioned that the Underground was spending some ten billion pounds on the various up-grades, modernising tracks, stations and trains. He spoke to the

camera in a first class compartment (probably on his way to Old Dalby) and pointed out that you cannot shut down (completely) to carry out the civil engineering work. At Old Dalby test track, he tried out driving a new S Stock and had a look at the current problem with 'door edge detectors', which was having massive effects on the Victoria Line (see later). He mentioned the problems that 'steel wheel on steel rail' could have when dealing with leaves, wet, ice and snow. Hopefully, sanders now being fitted would overcome at least some of these factors.

The scene moved to Tottenham Court Road and the massive re-building taking place there. We were told the station opened in 1900, when it saw about 20,000 passengers each day. Now it sees more like 150,000, and is being rebuilt to about six times the previous size. As a result, the Northern Line platforms were being closed for seven months, leaving just the Central Line to serve the station. Part of an interview with ITV's London evening news was shown, as was a clear view of car 51724 on the Northern Line.

The working areas were visited and various aspects were explained by Ben Thomson and Luke Hume (Site Managers), David McLaughlin (Pit Boss) and Sam Azubuike (Banksman). (Your reviewer wonders if he will ever work at **Bank** station?!). The latter explained how he was the 'eyes' of the surface crane driver when the equipment was lowered down the shaft and when rubble was brought up to the surface. One of the objectives of the re-build was to improve the (currently quite difficult) interchange between the two lines. Because the works were taking place in London clay, each new/widened tunnel was excavated a short distance with the surfaces then sprayed with 'shotcrete' before proceeding further. This was to avoid the possible collapse of the clay into the hole excavated. Work to reshape the platform walls (to give about two feet extra space on the platform, by 'straightening' the curved platform wall) took place behind a barrier, with trains still running on the other side. The platform excavations could only be carried out by hand and the one-hundred year old concrete had become really hard with the passage of time. We saw the miniature railway which runs along the platforms to carry equipment and spoil. (Your reviewer guesses that it was about eighteen inch gauge). David said he had been forty-four years 'down holes' and would probably die in one!

Moving to the 'public' side of the station, Barry Griffiths (Customer Service Assistant) told us that, in his sixteen years on the system, this was the biggest disruption he had witnessed. In helping passengers to find alternative routes away from the closed Northern Line, he said that the system map was a real boon. Even if tourists spoke no English, he could use it to show them how to get to their destination by another route.

Events moved to the Victoria Line, where we were shown the effects of a fairly major incident. The line had been closed for a bank holiday weekend and re-opened on the following Tuesday, following work on the signalling. The new signalling gave problems on the Tuesday, which, it would seem, persisted for much of that day, the line finally being suspended between Highbury & Islington and Seven Sisters as the evening peak commenced, even after a 'false start' a little earlier on. A suspension (in this case part only) was what the 'bosses' feared most, said George McNulty, Head of Infrastructure. However, the only way to 'fix' the problem was to close the affected section of line. At the Network Operations Centre it was added that, even when the problem is finally fixed, it takes quite a while to build the trains service back up to normal, with the possibility that it would still not be right by the end of service. One of the problems with railways is that so little is seen by the passengers, mainly just the trains and stations. They are largely unaware of the power/track/control systems/ signalling and radio aspects of operations.

David Waboso called for a 'post mortem' of the massive disruption caused by the above failure. Extracts from letters from delayed passengers were shown on a slide on the wall during this meeting. The feeling was conveyed that not enough was known about the new equipment prior to its installation on the track.

Returning to Victoria, we saw passengers being given assistance to board and alight from the escalators. Graeme Shaw, Head of Station upgrade, told us there were only two escalators available to and from the Victoria Line, as others were out of use for replacement. Passengers were seen standing two to each step. It was costing three million pounds to carry out the replacements, which would extend their life by twenty to forty years, depending on the usage they received. We saw a step being fitted, a task that has to be done one at a time. The work was carried out to tolerances of just a millimetre and was 'technically challenging'.

A train was experiencing door problems (the edge detectors again, see above and below), which meant the driver had to walk the length of the train (and, of course, back again) to investigate and rectify events.

At Northumberland Park depot, a new carriage arrived, on a road trailer from Derby. The rails to connect the trailer to the depot trackwork were put in position. Martin Dalby (surname as the test track!), Fleet Introduction Manager, said the new trains were faster and would thus allow more passengers to be carried as more trains could run. One of the old driving motor cars (3060) was seen shunting this new arrival (14088) on to road 39 in the depot, to join its already arrived 'colleagues' to begin forming a complete new train. The interviewer asked him about the fate of the old trains and was told they would be fitted with tripcocks and sent to Acton to be scrapped. Bearing in mind previous comments made (above) about passengers' understanding of anything beyond stations and trains, your reviewer wonders what they made of 'tripcocks'!

We joined Piccadilly Line driver Dylan Glenister, who made a service announcement to his passengers, followed by a request to his 'Mum' for the dinner menu that evening! Though this went unexplained, it was assumedly made (deliberately) to let the passengers think he had left the microphone on whilst ringing his 'Mum' on his mobile phone! He loved the job and wanted to 'preserve' the cab of a train when they reached the end of their lives. He 'saw' it in his lounge and (surprisingly!) his wife apparently agreed to the idea. One wonders whether this was his wife's way of humouring him – what would transpire if he actually managed to eventually buy one!

The final run of the 'old' (1967) Stock on the Victoria Line was covered, as all the new trains had now been delivered. A 'ceremonial' send off was given for the last of the 'veterans' and to train operator Boz Gunduz (shown on the credits as a driver!) fell this privilege. We saw the headboard showing 'March 1969 to July 2011' fixed to train 247 (assuming that running number was correct when the depot picture was taken). Howard Collins, Chief Operating Officer was at Victoria to see the train arrive (and, probably, travel on it, though that was not confirmed). He advised viewers that these were the first trains to run without a driver, in automatic operation. He chatted to a member of staff who had travelled on the first train to Brixton (1971) and now intended to travel on the last (of that stock) to make the same trip. The camera crew interviewed the group of enthusiasts (all of about sixteen years of age) who also made this 'last' journey. The interviews appeared to take place in the Vauxhall and Stockwell areas. One of the group had a hand-made poster (i.e. he had used a computer to produce a 'montage') which appeared to show a 1967 Stock on a tour at, your reviewer thought, either Uxbridge or Cockfosters?

Back at Tottenham Court Road, Barry Griffiths (Customer Service Assistant) notified a station cleaner about some 'wee' that needed clearing. This reminded him to relate the story of the 'secret crapper' on the Northern Line platforms! This happened, over quite a period of time, and it was thought that he/she did not actually perform on the platform, but brought the matter with him/her in their pocket! He also mentioned about having to get people to rush along for their last trains.

Ann O'Grady (Bakerloo Line driver) liked the trains on her line, where they were old and there were no computers to worry about, as on other lines, so you had to 'use your brain'. Asked by the interviewer what she would do when the Bakerloo's trains were modernised, she said that she would probably retire.

We then re-joined Boz Gunduz (see above), who told us that the new trains made his life much easier as they were so much nicer to drive. They were much easier on the elbows and shoulders than the older stock. He had wanted to be an astronaut in his younger days, but had ended up underground instead of in the stratosphere!

At Seven Sisters Control Room<sup>1</sup>, it was explained that there were more trains than platforms on the Victoria Line, so, in an incident situation, you could not get each of the thirty-one<sup>2</sup> trains to a platform. We watched as a train (at Seven Sisters) was delayed whilst the driver had to walk the length of the train to investigate a fault with the sensitive door edges (and then, of course, walk back again). Quite naturally, the whole service very soon became delayed as a consequence.

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<sup>1</sup> Station control room, or Line Control room in Northumberland Park depot? This wasn't made clear in the programme.

<sup>2</sup> The actual platforms on the Victoria Line comprise 16x2 plus one extra at Seven Sisters (i.e. the bay platform), making a total of 33 platform faces. Trains in service at the time of filming was 37, now 36. The information by your reviewer was as broadcast!

At Oxford Circus, Control Room Assistant Olu Osinuga explained how the station sometimes has to be closed when the platforms become overcrowded. This leads to passengers complaining and, in some cases, swearing. Some stick their foot in the closing door. Most do not want to take alternative routes and just wait for the station to re-open, come 'rain or snow'! Ticket clerk Stan Neill, with thirty-one years on the job, enjoys meeting the various people involved.

David Waboso arranged a 'conference call' with the train manufacturers (presumably this was Bombardier, but the name was not mentioned). Regarding the sensitive door edges, he emphasised that he was looking at basic engineering and asked what was the designed-in reliability, etc.? He questioned whether LUL should continue to accept trains from the manufacturer until reliability was shown to have improved quite markedly.

Back at Northumberland Park depot, engineer Tara Parandeh explained that efforts were being made to test possible modifications to the sensitive door edges, so that they would respond to items being pulled from outside the train, but not to items being pulled from inside the train. It was thought that modifications might take some six months and cost around three million pounds.

Returning to Tottenham Court Road, it was 04.00 on the day that the Northern Line platforms were being handed back to public use. Hoardings explained the 'up-date' so far. Barry Griffiths (mentioned earlier) took a look around the 'new' areas and rather expected passengers to be 'underwhelmed', as the scale of change was not what they might have expected after many months of platform closures. Passengers interviewed seemed to agree with him, but (as he pointed out) they have yet to see the whole scheme – this was just the beginning.

David Waboso and Howard Collins visited Tottenham Court Road and took a good look around. It will take four years to finish the whole up-date, which is designed to cope with two-hundred thousand people a day. David Waboso explained that, four or five years ago, it was expected that a total of some four million passengers a day (for the whole system) was anticipated to be reached by about 2018. However, this figure was then reached by 2011. So the up-graded station may not even be big enough in the fairly near future. Howard Collins remarked that, when you fix one point, as here, the problems then simply move along to another 'pinch point'!

Your reviewer was most interested in thoughts expressed that signalling equipment was not checked enough before being installed. He left the Signal Department of London Underground a quarter century ago (in August 1987), at a time when similar things were happening, in that we were taking in 'outside' manufactured 'black boxes' where little seemed to be either known or understood about what made them 'tick' or, more importantly 'not tick' under certain circumstances. It is now twenty-five years later and little seems to have changed!