

POINTS OF INTEREST

FROM UXBRIDGE TO THE GAS WORKS

Whilst researching through the 1934 Traffic Circulars for something totally unrelated, quite by accident your writer came across one of the "Supplements", which became known as "Yellow Perils", presumably because most (although not all) were printed on a yellow-ish paper. This was "Supplement to Traffic Circular (Railways) No.36, 1934" and was titled "Rebuilding of Northolt Road Bridge, South Harrow", which applied "from the cessation of traffic on Saturday night 15 September until commencement of traffic on Monday 17 September". In short, as far as the service was concerned, it applied just on Sunday 16 September 1934. Not only was the reconstruction of the bridge involved, but also the construction of the 'new' South Harrow station a short distance west of the original.

We are told that No.15 crossover west of South Harrow was not available and that "the through service of trains between the Piccadilly Line and Uxbridge will be cancelled throughout the day on Sunday 16 September All Piccadilly Line trains booked to run through to Rayners Lane¹ or Uxbridge will terminate at South Harrow and will be renumbered and re-formed ...", of which more in a moment.

A special service of buses was to be run between South Harrow and Rayners Lane for carrying passengers holding railway tickets available between those stations, with through tickets being issued as usual. It is made clear that the usual service of buses on route 206 will be maintained but railway tickets will not be available on that route.

Of great interest is that two four-car Metropolitan Line trains provided a 20-minute shuttle service between Uxbridge and Rayners Lane, presumably supplementing the normal Metropolitan Sunday service, and part compensating for the lack of Piccadilly Line trains. These two Metropolitan Line trains, after detraining at Rayners Lane, were to run empty to and from Harrow Gas Works signal box to reverse, crossing over from the Up (eastbound) line to the Down (westbound) line via No.8 crossover thereat. A reminder was issued to drivers that the crossover road at Harrow Gas Works was not electrified and emergency leads were to be provided on each of the two shuttle trains "for use in case of emergency". (At that time, there was no centre reversing siding west of Rayners Lane for the shuttle trains to reverse, and even if there had been, it would have involved three reversals from east to west). There is no reference as to the type of stock that was to be used on the shuttle, so presumably the choice was left in the hands of Neasden depot, where the shuttle trains originated. They could have been formed of compartment electric 'Bogie' Stock, electric MV or MW Stock, or 'Saloon' Stock, or a combination of MW and Saloon Stock.

¹ It is interesting to note that in this one document, it refers to both Rayners Lane and Rayner's Lane!



Above: Very soon after the new signal cabin at Rayners Lane was opened in October 1935, a four-car train of VT Stock approaches the station formed of an MW Stock motor car and 'Saloon' trailers/control trailer. It is possible that one of the two Gas Works shuttles could have been formed this way, but as no details were given in the Traffic Circular Supplement, we will never know! Note that access to the siding on both platforms comprise miniature colour light signals – disc shunt signals followed much later in December 1953.

For this work Rayners Lane signal box was to be opened continuously throughout both Saturday and Sunday nights, and Harrow Gas Works signal box was to be open between 08.15 and 23.55 on Sunday.

Returning to the Piccadilly Line's Uxbridge trains reversing at South Harrow, these trains were re-formed at South Harrow, so that the westbound arrival renumbered to the eastbound train, as if that had come from Uxbridge. By doing this, trains proceeding eastbound from South Harrow had the correct number according to the timetable in operation, which saved the need for a special timetable notice for the whole line with different set numbers throughout the day.

Just to complete these notes:

- 26.11.34 Rayners Lane signal box (in the 'V' of the junction east of the station) damaged by runaway ballast train early morning.
- 20.10.35 New signal cabin opened at Rayners Lane (west end of eastbound platform) with push-pull route setting levers. New reversing siding provided west of station.
- 17.11.35 Harrow Gas Works sidings controlled from Rayners Lane cabin with push button route setting levers. Ground Frame at Harrow Gas Works sidings closed and abolished.

THE LOUGHTON – EPPING SHUTTLE

Recent queries on this service has prompted the following, which readers may find useful.

The Loughton – Epping shuttle service came into being when the Central Line was extended to Epping on 25 September 1949. During off-peak periods, a limited through service to and from central London was provided beyond Debden to Epping and to 'double up' the service to Epping, a same frequency shuttle service with one 2-car train was provided. This first timetable (WTT No.6) saw the scheduled intervals as follows:

Through

	Service	Shuttle
MF midday	48 mins	48 mins
MF evening	40 mins	40 mins
SO 10.00 – 11.30	48 mins	48 mins
SO afternoon	40 mins	40 mins
SO after 17.30	37½ mins	37½ mins
Sun before 13.30	48 mins	48 mins
Sun after 13.30	40 mins	40 mins

The shuttle train was given the set number 90 and started up from Hainault depot shortly after 09.00 on weekdays² but earlier on Sundays.

In WTT No.7 (Sundays only from 5 February 1950) the 48-minute interval services were extended to operate until 19.30, after which the 40-minute intervals took over.

Following the withdrawal of the midday freight working to Ongar, WTT No.8 (5 June 1950) saw the midday Monday to Friday services improved to 36-minute intervals. On Saturday evenings after 17.30, the services were revised to operate every 40 minutes instead of at the 'clumsy' 37½ minute pattern. The Loughton – Epping shuttle on Saturdays was also increased from a two-car set to four cars.

WTT No.9 (19 February 1951) saw uncoupling introduced at off-peak times and in consequence of revised intervals throughout the line based on a 10-minute cycle, the through and shuttle service became every 40 minutes Monday to Friday midday, every 36 minutes Monday to Friday evening, Saturday morning, afternoon and evening,

WTT No.11 (3 November 1952) saw the shuttle service withdrawn Monday to Friday midday and evenings in favour of a 24-minute through service and withdrawn Saturday afternoon and evenings in favour of an 18-minute through service. This was because the platforms at Loughton would be fully occupied at uncoupling and coupling times with little room to fit in a reversing shuttle train. The shuttle train was increased to three cars Sundays, but reduced to three cars Saturday mornings.

The shuttle train on its remaining workings (Saturday morning and all-day Sunday) was reduced from 3- to 2-cars on Sundays from WTT No.14 (4 October 1954), only to be increased to 3 cars from 18 May 1957 during the currency of WTT No.17 (29 October 1956).

The remaining Loughton – Epping shuttle workings were withdrawn when the Ongar branch was electrified, when the shuttles then operated between Epping and Ongar (WTT No.18 – 18 November 1957).

² At this time there was also a Saturday 'peak' (morning and midday), and thus the term 'weekdays' referred to Mondays to Saturdays, unlike today when it generally refers to Mondays to Fridays.



Above: The Loughton – Epping shuttle is seen at Epping in the early days, formed of two 1926 MCCW DMs. At this time the cream around the saloon car windows was still very much in evidence, but not for much longer.

Photo: John H. Meredith