

FROM THE PAPERS

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AUGUST 2012 MODERN RAILWAYS – Over 400,000 French people now live in Britain, most of them in London. John Glover reports that *The Sunday Times Magazine* has kindly provided a new version of the familiar London Underground diagram, with the station names helpfully translated into *Franglais*. Many are straightforward, as with *Pont de Londres* for London Bridge and *Rue de Liverpool* for Liverpool Street. Some such as Holborn are unchanged, but *Plus de Stan* was perhaps inevitable for Stanmore. Literal translations abound, with *Buisson de Berger* for Shepherd’s Bush, *Chapelle Blanche* for Whitechapel, and *Chêne Brûlé* for Burnt Oak. Croissants apparently take their name from the crescent shape, hence *Mornington Croissant*. Marylebone appears as *L’Os de Marie* (think about it), but we leave readers to ponder which station has been termed *Gare de Napoleon**. (* Waterloo).

01.08.12 UXBRIDGE GAZETTE – LU passengers will have more to grab hold of when extra handles are installed on the new Metropolitan Line trains, after complaints the existing bars are too high. New S Stock trains were introduced earlier this year at a cost of about £1.5B. The walkthrough trains have now replaced the aging M(!) stock trains, with fewer seats and more standing room. But the horizontal bars were higher than on the older trains by a matter of inches and smaller passengers struggled to reach them. The new handles, called strap hangers, will be suspended from the bars. The Federation of Metropolitan Line Users’ Association said it first raised concern about the height of the bars, said, “In the design stage about two years ago, we suggested they fit strap hangers, but they refused, saying they weren’t necessary. About a year ago we raised it again. Three months ago they decided to trial them on one of the trains and that went very well”. A Metropolitan manager said, “The rails and poles can’t be moved due to the structure of the train, however we will be fitting straphangers to all the S Stock trains currently in service”. (*Straphangers! What goes around, comes around!* – Ed.).

01.08.12 THE TIMES – Never mind the seats, the whole of Central London seems empty. Veteran Londoners liken the scene to a deserted town in a Western, minus the windblown tumbleweed and menacing guitar. Rush hour isn’t rushed. Seats can be found on the Underground even at times when passengers have normally to stand shoulder to chest, enjoying the various fragrances that intimate proximity make olfactory available. The roads far from being clogged, offer unique opportunities to study at leisure the various marking systems used by the transport authorities. What appears to have happened is something that other cities have experienced when hosting the Olympics. So stern have been the warnings of disruption and transport chaos and so widespread the rumours of profiteering and crowding, that countless Londoners have decamped for the duration and visitors have delayed their trips to the capital.

01.08.12 METRO – *Text from Belinda* – “Thanks to the underground operator on the Victoria Line for making everybody smile by saying, “Big up, big up, respect the Olympic athletes. Ready, driver? On your marks, Get set, Go!”.

01.08.12 EVENING STANDARD – *Tweet from BoyDoyle* – “I have never travelled in London with such ease. Will Underground staff hand back their Olympic ransoms – sorry, bonuses?”.

01.08.12 EVENING STANDARD – Plans for a light-rail or tram route running the length of Oxford Street will be examined by a commission overseeing the future for the West End. The number of buses travelling through Oxford Circus – about 280 an hour at peak times – could then be cut back. The West End Commission, set up in the wake of the row over parking charges, would consider new forms of transport after the arrival of Crossrail in 2018, which would reduce the need for arterial bus routes across central London. The idea for a tram along Oxford Street was first mooted by the previous Mayor, Ken Livingstone, but it was dropped as it was considered too expensive and disruptive.

02.08.12 THE TIMES – *By Columnist Alan Lee* – “So it was here, at last, the inevitable transport crash that doomsayers such as me had been predicting for years. Heading off on the Underground to see Luol Deng and his boys at the afternoon basketball, the Central Line had “serious delays” reported. But the magic of the Rings is Harry Potterish. Even the creaky old Underground, a

perennial source of black humour to its regulars, has mended its ways. Sure, there had been a bit of early congestion – this is London after all. But by the time I climbed aboard at Holborn, three trains were due in the next 5 minutes and the Olympic empty seats mystery had spread to the Underground. Things get surreal at Stratford. Give a megaphone to an Underground operative and you are likely to get commands in blunt, humourless tones. Yet here was this bald, gurning official jollying the crowd through the station and even leading the patriotic chants. And he had not been drinking, honest. These are the twin trends of the Olympics. London is almost empty, Games-goers aside, and that vacuum – the space to smell the roses – has infected people and places customarily immune to such things. Such a giddy spirit is developing that, come next weekend, we may well be reaching for the sedatives”.

02.08.12 METRO – While I applaud a King using public transport. I am a little less comfortable with the LU system being infiltrated with various MPs. Conservative, Labour and Lib-Dems alike have been “getting ahead of the Games” by giving their Oyster cards a run-out and roughing it with us mere mortals. I have been on the Underground every day and the last thing I want is to be stuck next to David Cameron, or any other MP, on the way to the Olympic Park. “You have to remember what we inherited from Labour”. Listen, no offence, but I am trying to eat my bacon sandwich here. “Okay, but I want to make it clear the carbon omissions from these Games have been lower than the average”. Forget it! I’ll get off and walk!

05.08.12 INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY – Have the travel problems been as bad as expected? **What they said:** Grim tidings in Tube announcements from Boris Johnson: “Our roads and public transport are going to be exceptionally busy”. He said more than 1M people a day were going to put huge pressure on the transport network. **What happened:** With the exception of the Central Line’s almost daily capitulation, the Underground has coped incredibly well, with increases in journeys. **Outcome:** The Boris recordings are dropped. Now commuters are told, “While in central London, why not visits shops, restaurants and theatres?”.

06.08.12 METRO – *Text from DB* – “Has anybody else noticed the vast amounts of extra work the Underground and bus drivers are having to do during the Olympics, justifying their £600 bonuses? It seems like business as usual (if not quieter) for most of them to me”.

06.08.12 METRO – It’s not just the athletes breaking records this summer – the number of people using the capital’s transport services is also scaling new heights. On 3 August on the Underground, a total of 4.4M breaking the record of 4.3M the previous day. On the DLR, 500,000 for the first time, up more than 70%. On the Overground, 2.8M during last week, up 27%.

08.08.12 EVENING STANDARD – Many of the athletes cramming onto overstretched public transport network have helped bring some Olympic spirit to commuters. Team GB members were seen waiting for eastbound trains at Mile End while Rwanda athletes were spotted waiting patiently for a train at Shoreditch High Street Overground station. One of the biggest thrills for those not fortunate enough to witness the Olympic events first hand was when Venezuelan fencer Ruben Limardo Gascon boarded a DLR carriage with his Gold medal around his neck.

09.08.12 METRO – *Tweet by Olympic Enthusiast* – “Thank you to the Central Line driver on Tuesday evening who advised us that Team GB had won another Gold medal”.

09.08.12 EVENING STANDARD – *Text from David* – “Very pleasing to see US athletes taking the Underground. I was less pleased to see an administrative member of the same party with his feet on the chair on the DLR. Please be a little more thoughtful in future”.

10.08.12 METRO – 6 August was the busiest day in Underground history with 4.51 million journeys made. TfL’s Peter Hendy said, “We are tremendously grateful to Londoners for their efforts in adapting their travel patterns – it’s made a huge contribution to the success of the Games so far and I would urge people to continue to plan their journeys and avoid the busiest stations at the busiest times”.

10.08.12 EVENING STANDARD – *Text from Louise* – “To the chap on the Central Line on Thursday morning. I got on at South Woodford and you saw I used a stick but remained steadfastly in your seat even when other people were looking at you. You couldn’t even look at me in the eye when you got off”.

13.08.12 METRO – *Statement by Transport Commissioner Peter Hendy* – “While the Games were here, we carried more than 60M passengers on the Underground, 30% more than usual and more

than at any time in its 149-year history. The number using the DLR rose by more than 100% and using the Overground by 47%, compared to last year. By changing the way you travelled, you helped support the Games kept London moving. Without you, the past two weeks would not have been possible. Thank you”.

13.08.12 METRO – Carl Downer, a customer services adviser at Victoria Underground station, has been helping travellers get into the Olympic spirit. He cheered on fellow countryman Usain Bolt and in his announcements on the platform he told customers, “The most important thing is to have a lovely day and don’t forget Team GB”. He said, “The customers are such nice people and they come and have a chat with you”.

14.08.12 METRO – *Text from Rob* – “I think London Bus and Underground staff should now ask for a £500 bonus as they are likely to be busier than they have been for the past fortnight”.

14.08.12 THE TIMES – The Hong Kong mass transit, whose international business included co-running the London Overground network in Britain, reported a 6.1% rise in revenues in the first six months of this year to \$1.4B. MTR is in the bidding to run London’s Thameslink and Thameside commuter train services.

14.08.12 THE TIMES – *By columnist Alan Lee* – “The hero of London 2012 is a train – the Javelin train, to be precise. Where would we have been without it, especially when the inevitable happened and the Central Line let us down on the very morning when the athletics started? I had actually boarded a train for Stratford when the solemn announcement came of an indefinite suspension. It was to last for several hours and, but for the creation of the Javelin, would have ensured a desperately poor image of empty stadium seats. The Javelin rushes from St. Pancras International to Stratford in seven minutes. Whoever came up with the idea, and decreed that it would be free to all Games-goers, deserves a Gold medal of their own.

15.08.12 METRO – *Text from Andrew* – “Don’t blame the bus and Underground drivers for collecting their bonuses. We all fell for the TfL/Boris Johnson hype about how busy it would be during the Olympic period”.

15.08.12 EVENING STANDARD – *Text from LM* – “Out of interest, how much did the free Zones 1-9 Travelcards provided with every Olympic ticket issued cost the transport system? Surely regular Underground passengers should not have to bear the cost?”

15.08.12 METRO – According to TfL’s latest figures, 0.5M people used the capital’s new cable car river crossing in the first six weeks of opening – with an average of 20,000 trips every day. The Air-Line has seen a succession of record-breaking days since launch, with 31,964 journeys on Saturday 11 August, marking its busiest day.

16.08.12 METRO – The 18M journeys to Olympic events were a breeze for London’s improved transport network, it was claimed. More than 900,000 visitors used services like park-and-ride, shuttle buses and cycling routes, while journeys on the DLR doubled to 6M. The Olympic Delivery Authority said transport “delivered”.

17.08.12 HOUNSLOW CHRONICLE – *From the August 1912 Archives* – “The competition commenced three years ago to improve the appearance of the District Railway line and to make the stations attractive has again been an unqualified success. The efforts of the competitors have proved of great interest to those who travel to Town by this line. The gardens were inspected by a committee of directors and in view of their excellence it was decided to increase the amount to be awarded from £37 to £43. The results of this year’s competition has just been made known and the first three prizes of £5 each go to Boston Manor, Hounslow Barracks and Acton Town. Second prizes went to Ealing Common, South Kensington and St. James’s Park.”

17.08.12 EVENING STANDARD – *Text from Martin Akehurst* – “On a really hot, sticky day on the Underground, when there’s a carriage connecting door with an open window for ventilation, why does someone always stand in front of it and block it? On a cross-London train yesterday as one person vacated the spot another took over. Is it only them who are hot and sticky?”

17.08.12 EVENING STANDARD – *By columnist Andrew Neather* – It was an Olympic win more jaw-dropping to Londoners than any Gold medal – our transport system managed just fine during the Games. Not only were there no major delays; the Underground carried even more passengers than predicted, up almost 1/3 on the same time last year. So why can’t it run like this the whole time? Could this be London’s real legacy? LU’s MD Mike Brown points out that maintenance schedules

were devised to make sure the entire system was in shape for the Games and that very little work had to be done during them. Meanwhile, Londoners responded well to please to change their normal travel patterns. Brown would like this to continue. Yet all this will only take us so far. And while there were no major Games problems, the Underground remains maddening to its users on far too many days, chronically overcrowded and prone to delays. To fix such problems, the upgrade programme cannot slacken. The Northern Line will be upgraded by 2014. Replacing all the trains and signalling on the District, Circle, H&C and Metropolitan lines won't be complete until 2018, also when Crossrail opens. And it will then go to work on the Piccadilly and Bakerloo lines, whose trains are already, respectively, 39 and 40 years old. "The Piccadilly line is going to fall apart unless we upgrade it" warns Brown. Yet there is no money promised from central government. For those projects not started before the end of this spending round in 2015, TfL and the Mayor need to persuade the Chancellor to give London £1.2B a year. A spending review is reportedly pencilled in for autumn next year – all signs are that it will be savage. Last time around, in 2010, ministers recognised London's centrality to the British economy. Next time, Brown worries that some may take a view that "London had its turn last time" – a mad way of looking at it. This week Boris Johnson has been talking up his desire for a new airport. I'd rather he concentrated on fixing the Underground – and persuading the Chancellor to pay for it.

20.08.12 METRO – Eight people were stabbed at a Seoul (South Korea) Underground station following a row over spitting. A jobless man brandishing a box-cutter, slashed passengers who confronted him on the train. He continued his rampage on a platform before being arrested. The 39-year-old was looking for work on Seoul's underground network!

20.08.12 METRO – The London 2012 Games have been a great success thanks in part to £6.5B invested in the capital's public transport network and 10 years of preparation. Dubbed the first "public transport Games", few people know that 2012 is actually the third time the Underground has been placed at the heart of the Games. **1908 – Emergency Games** – So named due to London hosting the Games instead of Rome, after the recent Vesuvius eruption near Naples. Horse-drawn buses and trams were still in service but were being increasingly replaced by trains and buses. The Olympic venue was White City but the Central London barely reached the stadium. It was the first time several independent operators agreed to jointly promote their services as "the Underground" in a bit to boost passenger numbers, and even produced a free publicity map of the network – an early Tube map. **1948 – Austerity Games** – So named due to rationing and economic hardship, no new Olympic venues or athletes' accommodation were built. Many of London's mainline and Underground stations had been damaged during the war so transport was very much "make do and mend". Despite the lack of funds, some larger projects were completed, including Wembley Park station as Wembley was the main Games venue that year. **2012 – Public Transport Games** – The Victorian Underground network of 1908 and 1948 has since developed into one of the world's most efficient public rail systems, helping make London the most accessible place in Europe. The 2012 Games are the first Olympics and Paralympics where spectators have been encouraged to travel to the events solely by public transport, with each getting a Travelcard with their event ticket. More than 60 million journeys were made by Underground between 27 July and 12 August, that is 30% more than usual. Record investment in the transport network, with major upgrades at stations, means the 2012 Games will leave a lasting legacy of improved public transport in the capital. Perhaps in decades to come, the Underground will help support a fourth London Games.

20.08.12 EVENING STANDARD – Airport style security screening is being considered for Underground and mainline stations across London. Earlier plans for individual screening were abandoned because the Underground carries 3.4M people a day and the Home Office is now looking at technology which would enable mass screening at escalators and ticket barriers. Officials will next month begin to look at solutions, with a report due next March. The technology would not only detect weapons on people and in their bags, but would also be able to scan wheelchairs and prosthetic limbs. After the 7/7 attacks, the DfT carried out trials for mass screening at five mainline and Underground stations. Members of the public had a positive attitude to screening but favoured sniffer dogs over screening and were unwilling to accept major delays to their journeys. A senior Underground source said, "Previous proposals for screening didn't work out because we carry too many people. The Underground and the City would not be able to function because we would take too long to get people to destinations. New technology is very different".

24.08.12 METRO – Letter from PLT – “Thanks to TfL staff at Rayners Lane station. It was wonderful to see you help a blind lady and her dog onto a train, then count the doors from the end of the train and radio that information through to Harrow-on-the Hill to make sure she was met at the same door”.

24.08.12 METRO – The £6.5B upgrade programme now in progress on TfL’s network means it is already much easier for disabled people, passengers with reduced mobility and those with buggies. One aim has been to create step-free access at stations using lifts and ramps as an alternative to escalators or stairs. New trains on the Victoria and Metropolitan lines have wider doors and more spaces for wheelchairs. The Metropolitan trains also have been designed without doors between carriages so they are easier to walk through. New lifts to allow passengers with mobility impairment, including wheelchair users, to enter or exit station platforms without facing the barrier of stairs. Platform surfaces in many stations have been raised or realigned at certain points so that the edge is now level with the train entrance to make it easier to board and alight. Signs on the platform show where the humps are. More than 250 wide-aisle gates have also been installed. Temporary manual boarding ramps have been added to 16 Underground stations for the duration of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. These help wheelchair users to board and alight from trains more easily at these stations, which have gap between the train and the platform.

24.08.12 THE TIMES – What will we do without the Olympic volunteers? Waiting for a train at King’s Cross I overheard an American visitor talking with one of those cheery helpers. “Is it true that your Queen Boadicea is buried here?” the American asked. Without a moment’s hesitation the volunteer replied, “She’s under Platform 8, sir.” Fantastic knowledge! I didn’t have the heart to point out that archaeologists have now changed their minds. According to latest scholarship, Boadicea (or Boudicca as historians insist on calling her) is more likely to be buried under a McDonalds on the outskirts of Birmingham. But why spoil a great myth? Better for the tourists if we keep her inside Zone 1 of an Underground Travelcard.

28.08.12 METRO – On 24 August, the Paralympic flame joined passengers on the DLR between Mudchute and Canary Wharf as part of its journey through the capital. It was carried by Aneurin Wood, who works with disabled children for the Learning Trust.

28.08.12 METRO – This week marks the DLR’s 25th Anniversary. In that time the network has grown from just two routes serving 15 stations to 45 stations on 6 branches. The DLR is London’s first fully accessible railway and will play a key part carrying passengers to and from the Paralympic Games venues.

28.08.12 EVENING STANDARD – More than 300,000 people have viewed a *YouTube* clip of a sleepy LU passenger snuggling up to a stranger on the train. But one person who did not see the funny side was the human pillow’s wife – who suspected that something must have been “going on” between him and the drowsy woman. The video shows the young woman suddenly cuddling the arm of the man sitting next to her, after nodding off on a late-night Jubilee Line train. She appears to be overcome with embarrassment after suddenly waking up to realise she has snuggled up to a man she did not know.

29.08.12 EVENING STANDARD – After an Underground information board warning of mice attacks on passengers became an online hit, the Standard has uncovered more comedy signs on the Underground. TfL has confirmed that the notice at Farringdon station advising travellers to tuck their trousers into their socks to avoid being bitten was a spoof, and was wiped clean as soon as it “came to the attention” of station staff. However, as the images show it is not the first time that staff and passengers have taken it upon themselves to lighten the mood on the Underground. One invented sign at South Kensington was addressed to “parents with children”, with the sarcastic message: “Aren’t you wonderful taking little Hugo to the Museums?” This was followed in big red letters, with “WALK ON THE LEFT”. Travellers at Angel are familiar with “thought for today” messages on the station’s whiteboards, which even have their own website – thoughtsofangel.com. In one occasion at one station on the train indicators were shown as “BAKERLOO LINE – GOOD SERVICE and NORTHERN LINE - GOD SERVICE”.