

FROM THE PAPERS

Items for “From the Papers” should be sent to Ian McKenzie at 24 Thamespoint, Fairways, Teddington, TW11 9PP, and not to the Editor of this journal. Please ensure that contributions are identified by date and source publication.

AUTUMN/WINTER 2013 THREE RIVERS TIMES – Clearance work has now begun to prepare construction of the Croxley Rail Link in 2014. The scheme will provide environmentally friendly links to Harlequin Shopping Centre, Watford General Hospital, Vicarage Road Football Ground and Croxley Business Park. The link will improve travel to and from London and provide easier access to the national rail network. Completion is scheduled for 2016.

21.11.13 SOUTHWARK NEWS – A public enquiry into the controversial Northern Line extension proposed to go through Kennington was started this week. Residents’ groups from Walworth and Kennington have vehemently opposed plans to extend the line to Battersea, because they say Kennington station will become overcrowded and unsafe. The Groups say the station will be unable to cope with the extra passengers in an emergency. There has only been lip-service paid to such elements as overcrowding, evacuation routes and safety. There is a budget of £1B and yet Kennington station will still only have one spiral staircase for evacuation in an emergency and no disabled access. Local residents are also concerned about a community bee-keeping group based in Kennington Park, which will to be relocated if the scheme goes ahead.

22.11.13 FINANCIAL TIMES – In a sign of the sweeping changes under way at the world’s oldest metro system, TfL also said it was talking to Amazon about converting its ticket offices – which will be closed in favour of automatic ticket machines – to “drop-off” points for its goods. Under the plan for all night running on Friday and Saturday nights on the Central, Piccadilly, the Charing Cross branch of the Northern, and all of the Jubilee and Victoria lines, all ticket offices at the 240 stations on the network will close, with a net loss of 750 jobs among the 5,750 station staff. The closures will bring staff onto the forecourt to help travellers buy tickets. The plan will also throw open the commercial possibilities for the vacated spaces. Amazon did not return requests for comment.

25.11.13 EVENING STANDARD – *Letter from Sarah Hunt* – “Go to Brixton Tube at 2pm any day and you will find a queue of people at the ticket office trying to register their Oyster cards with one discount or another. It’s a similar situation in any less affluent area. It is also people with less money who will tend to go to the ticket office windows having their journeys amended if they forget to touch in or out; some people cannot afford to wait a few days for a reply to an email then collect a refund on the gates. I’ve no problem with ticket offices closing at remote stations or small central ones, like Pimlico; but they should maintain them where there is a demand”.

26.11.13 EVENING STANDARD – *Text from Tom Hacourt* – “As a member of Tube staff I can confidently predict that 24-hour running will be logistically nightmare. Stations heaving with hundreds of drunken people, accidents happening and fights breaking out, all made worse by the lack of public amenities on the Tube platforms and in the trains. When do they think the clean-up will happen? Sunday night and early Monday morning, perfectly timed to disrupt the start of the commuters’ week”.

26.11.13 EVENING STANDARD – *Text from Catherine Harkin* – “I dropped my bag onto the Metropolitan Line track at 6pm last night at Baker Street. Three members of staff came to my rescue and retrieved after four trains had passed, without any disruption to the service. My warmest thanks to them”.

27.11.13 METRO – Underground workers in the RMT union are to be balloted on potential strike action over job cuts and ticket office closures, in the New Year. RMT’s Bob Crow said 1,000 jobs could go and the safety of passengers would be compromised. He said: “It is absolutely clear that the attack on staffing levels and passenger services would have a devastating impact on Underground safety, with assaults, and thefts soaring through the roof. The plans rip up promises on ticket offices that the Mayor gave to London before he was elected”. LU employs 18,000 people, including 5,500 station staff.

27.11.12 THE TIMES – (*see item on 25.11.12 in January Underground News*) – *Letter from Coral Harrow (nee Hemsley)* – “206, Brompton Road (*address of disused Brompton Road station*) was my father’s address during WW2. He was Lt-Col Arthur Hemsley, the CO of the AA Operations

stationed there. He told me on one occasion when King George VI came to tea, he took him down below to watch the Underground trains running past. Little did passengers know that their King was watching as they bypassed the “ghost” station”.

27.11.13 EVENING STANDARD – *Letter from L. Shackleton* – “All-night travel and getting station staff out from behind desks are imaginative steps to improving the Tube experience. A further bolder step towards driverless trains would require substantial extra investment in safety devices. Whilst the RMT is perfectly justified in raising real concerns, such as late night safety at suburban stations, it is very unwise to resist the Mayor’s bold initiative on principle. By playing things right, TfL employees could gain from increased use of the Tube network in terms of job security and pay. A purely negative approach will not be appreciated by Londoners, for many of whom the city already sleeps”.

27.11.13 DAILY TELEGRAPH – Two bulls, *Lloyd* and *Leila* are facing the abattoir because of bureaucracy – they are the star attractions at Stepney City Farm, However, after Crossrail took over their field, the farm said it no longer had the means to support them. The Hillside Animal Sanctuary in Norfolk has offered to take them in and look after them. DEFRA will not let them travel to Norfolk because they do not have a passport. Almost 14,000 people have signed a petition to save the cows, but the officials said they cannot make an exception, and they must be sent to a “disposal centre”.

28.11.13 SOUTHWARK NEWS – Students from Bacon’s College have been helping to decorate a metal sculpture which will stand next to Rotherhithe Tunnel. The statue will be of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the 19th century engineer, who helped to plan the Thames Tunnel from Rotherhithe to Wapping with his father, Marc Isambard Brunel, which was completed in 1843. It was the first tunnel under a river anywhere in the world and is regarded as one of the greatest engineering feats of the 19th century. To help convince people that it was safe, Brunel famously organised a lavish underwater banquet in the tunnel. This tunnel later became part of the East London line and is currently part of London Overground.

28.11.13 EVENING STANDARD – The shift to “contactless” payment to start on the Underground next month will help deliver an annual £80M saving in fare collection, transport chiefs claimed. TfL said it would herald a “paradigm shift” in fare payment for public transport around the world. 5,000 Londoners will become the first commuters on the Underground to use the contactless system in a two-month pilot. Already accepted on buses, it will then be fully introduced on the Underground, DLR and Overground in early summer 2014. It will also operate on National Rail within Zone 6 where Oyster is currently accepted. Using debit or credit cards, fares are charged directly to passengers’ account, bypassing the Oyster smartcard system. It will be more convenient than topping up at a ticket hall or newsagents. TfL calculates that the scheme will help cut the cost of fare collection from 9p to 7p for every £1 spent on travel within 5 years as part of moves to make ticketing fully automated. Given concerns over contactless security, passengers will be advised to keep bank and Oyster cards separate, although TfL says it is impossible for both to be charged for the same journey. There are 5.5M adults paying a pay-as-you-go fare using Oyster cards.

30.11.13 THE TIMES – *Comment from columnist Daniel Finkelstein* – “This morning the guard (sic) announces that there is a problem with my train and I have to “alight” at Wembley Park. I assume this means get off. He explains that the train will no longer be “physically stopping” at Baker Street. For the rest of the journey, I puzzled over the other ways it could be stopping. Metaphorically?”

02.12.13 EVENING STANDARD – Mayor Boris Johnson announced a “real terms freeze” on next year’s bus and Underground fares. They will go up by 3.1% on average, in line with inflation, to help families who are “feeling the pinch”. Winners include pay-as-you-go Oyster users, who will see no rise at all in peak fares at Underground and train fares starting or finishing outside Zone 1. The daily “cap” on pay-as-you-go charges also stays at this year’s prices. All free and concessionary travel stays for young, elderly and disabled people.

03.12.13 TIME OUT – One (of four) winter outfits to avoid – antlers. Again a popular choice as we move into the festive season, but very likely to cause bad feeling at a crowded bar or worse if caught in departing tube doors and you find yourself galloping frantically towards the end of the platform and oblivion.

03.12.13 TIME OUT – London’s Underground stations as shopping centres? It is looking that way as some of our biggest retailers go down the tube with big “click and collect” ambitions. It seems London simply isn’t sufficiently shopping orientated at the moment, so TfL has stepped in with plans to turn bits of the Underground into mini retail hubs. Last week ASDA announced an expansion of its current “click and collect” service to six Underground stations (*see item 20.11.13 in January Underground News*), so you will be able to do your shopping in your lunch break and pick it up from the Underground station on your way home from work. It certainly beats fighting for the last bag of pre-packaged salad at your local express supermarket. It turns out that Amazon is keen to spare customers the hassle of hoofing it to a Parcelforce depot in Plaistow on account of a “sorry you were out” card. The online retailer already has, on a trial run, an “*Amazon Locker*” in Hammersmith station that allows customers to pick their orders. What next? Trolleys dispensing booze on the new 24-hour trains? Vending machines offering deodorants to stinky commuters? Opening a pet shop with all the mice you can catch off the tracks? The retail world is TfL’s oyster (!).

04.12.13 THE TIMES – A coroner has said that he was considering a verdict of neglect against the celebrity psychiatric clinic, *The Priory*, after a man went missing from the wards shortly before killing himself. Neil Carter, who suffered from *misophonia*, a fear of noise, stepped in front of a train at Turnham Green on 20 November 2012. The West London inquest into the death of Mr. Carter, was told that there was “culture” of wards being understaffed and patient forms not being filled in properly. A nurse at the clinic in Roehampton, told the court: “On the day Mr. Carter went missing we were very busy. I was on my own to observe three patients. I was working over two floors of the hospital, but I had to get on with it. There was no point asking for help, that’s the culture at *The Priory*. It is not always possible to fill in the forms at the correct time”.

04.12.13 THE TIMES – In the Government’s latest National Infrastructure Plan, there is a green light for funding of the £1B extension of the Northern Line to Battersea.

04.12.13 THE TIMES – *From the Times Diary* – Next Stop Google Street? Tottenham Court Road Underground station could be renamed as “*Samsung*”, Boris Johnson said, but only if the Korean electronics giant pays “a stonking sum” for the naming rights. We have been here before. In 1909, Harry Selfridge wanted Bond Street station renamed after his store in exchange for him funding a subway. Good taste prevailed and let’s hope it will again, lest we end up with “*Greggs*” the **Bakerloo** Line.

04.12.13 METRO – The Wandsworth Road exit at Vauxhall Underground station has been closed as part of work to increase the station’s capacity to make it step-free. Passengers should use the Vauxhall Bridge exit instead until the Wandsworth Road exit reopens in the spring of 2015. The number of passengers using the station is set to increase by 40% over the next few years. To create the extra space needed, the ticket hall will be reconfigured to allow for more ticket gates and wide-aisle gates. Once the Underground station lift is completed in 2015, it will create a fully accessible interchange between rail, bus and Underground.

04.12.13 CITYAM –The RMT union called off plans to strike on the Piccadilly Line from noon today, in a decision hailed by TfL as an example of “what can be achieved when all parties are committed to engaging in constructive discussions”. Unions are currently balloting for separate industrial action over plans to run the Underground all night at weekends and move staff out of ticket offices.

05.12.13 EVENING STANDARD – *Text from ASLEF Shrugged* – “So the above-inflation fare increases that Boris said were essential in order to fund the Tube upgrade, aren’t essential after all. Add this to running the Tube all night at weekends from November 2015 and it appears that Boris is trying to do something to make up for the shortcomings in his transport policies. What’s the betting he’s going to go for a third term!”

06.12.13 METRO – A new timetable is being introduced on the Metropolitan Line. The line’s manager, David White, said: “Continuing enhancements to our track and other infrastructure, as well as the full roll-out of new trains, is allowing us to slightly increase the speeds at which train operate on parts of the line. This means that some journeys – particularly on the Watford and Amersham/Chesham branches – will be slightly faster than at present. Savings on most of the off-peak Chesham-Aldgate service is up to four and half minutes.

09.12.13 EVENING STANDARD – *Letter from Fran Fraser* – “Change your mind on ticket offices, Boris. 71% of Londoners are worried about them closing according to a poll just two months ago, and staff at my local station, warn there will be chaos. Why must we hang on to a helpline, or to our bank once contactless payment comes in, to correct an erroneous charge?”.

09.12.13 EVENING STANDARD – *Letter from Tim McCormick* – “Closing ticket offices seems ordained by use trends. LU’s information design is outstanding. I’ve just spent two weeks visiting and don’t think I interacted with an agent once. As long-time New Yorker, subways stopping at 12.30 am seem second class and quaint – 24-hour Tubes are a key psychic step”.

09.12.13 EVENING STANDARD – Londoners believe lower Underground fares are more of a priority than late-night Underground trains, a YouGov survey has found. The poll reveals 46% of people in the capital think lower fares should be TfL’s top priority. Only 17% said that late-night trains should be the main concern. The Mayor recently backtracked on plans to put up the cost of Travelcards after Chancellor George Osborne said in his Autumn Statement that he would freeze prices.

10.12.13 EVENING STANDARD – The traditional Underground strike action on Boxing Day has been avoided after transport chiefs agreed to a £350 bonus for drivers. About 800 drivers will work on 26 December after a deal was struck between the unions ASLEF and RMT, and London Underground. It follows two (*three!* – 2010, 2011 and 2012 – *Ed.*) years of [Boxing Day] strikes as the unions demanded a bonus for working on a bank holiday. ASLEF spokesman said: “We are very pleased there is going to be a service which will be staffed entirely by those who have volunteered to work on Boxing Day while others have chosen to spend the day with their families”. The bonus will be paid out of the savings made to arrangements for transferring some drivers between lines and depots.

10.12.13 EVENING STANDARD – *Text from Ian Bartlett* – “The new Metropolitan Line timetable has been introduced this week and still there has been no reinstatement of fast-service trains during off-peak hours. For most of the week, millions of pounds’ worth of recently upgraded infrastructure is grossly underused while passengers from north of Rickmansworth suffer outrageously slow and tedious journeys into London. Until Boris can sort this mess out, TfL doesn’t deserve to take over any rail franchise that runs beyond the limits of the GLA boundary”.

10.12.13 EVENING STANDARD – *Column by Andrew Adonis* – “Crossrail2 was absent from George Osborne’s Infrastructure announcements last week. Yet without it, today’s sardine conditions on central London’s Underground will be nothing compared with the congestion of the 2020s – the capital will grind to a halt. This new north-south underground line needs to be built straight after the completion of Crossrail1 in 2019. For the new line to open in the mid-2020s, the Mayor needs to decide early in 2014 on a route, a construction timetable and a credible funding package. Could we muddle along, packed ever more tightly on the Victoria, Northern and Piccadilly Lines? Even with current and projected Underground upgrades, this isn’t an option. Without a new north-south line, stations will often need to be closed on safety grounds during peak hours, as already happens sometimes on the Victoria and Northern lines. Why Crossrail2? Because it transforms public transport capacity on the north-east – south-west London corridor, essential to tackling congestion and to opening up regeneration zones for new housing within Greater London”.

12.12.13 SOUTHWARK NEWS – Passengers at Elephant & Castle Underground station are being shafted with the lifts breaking down nearly 50 times a year. This year, they have broken down 48 times, trapping a total of 727 people inside. Last year, 651 people had to be rescued from the 49 lift breakdowns. TfL say the lifts at Elephant & Castle were last maintained in October this year, with three of them scheduled for replacement, and two to be refurbished, in the next two years. In the Christmas rush last year, 53 people were trapped inside one lift, but according to TfL, in most cases passengers are released after only a few minutes.

13.12.13 WATFORD OBSERVER – (*see item for 22.11.13 in January Underground News*) – A Carpenders Park passenger who went on a drunken racist rant at an Underground passenger has been jailed for six weeks. He was arrested after being filmed shouting abuse at a Japanese passenger on the Bakerloo Line. The footage was later posted on YouTube and went viral after celebrities linked in the clip via their Twitter accounts. He had admitted public order offences at an earlier hearing. Initially the female Japanese passenger decided not to report it to the police

because she thought it would be difficult to trace the offender. Once she heard about the YouTube clip, she decided to contact the police.

13.12.13 EVENING STANDARD – A string of Crossrail stations are set to be transformed by top artists after the City of London Corporation pledged £3.5M. The aim is to create a £7M commissioning fund with talks already underway with galleries such as White Cube, which represents Damien Hurst and Tracey Emin. Although an art programme was promised for the new central London stations, Crossrail was not permitted to spend any “railway” money on it.

19.12.13 METRO – School children from Oaks Park High School in east London have created a “home for nature” with LU and the RSPB. This project is part of a series of celebrations to mark the Underground’s 150th year, and will see 150 such areas across the Underground network. The children’s wildlife area consists of 150 trees, shrubs and wild flowers, bordering the railway embankment near Newbury Park station. It will attract birds, small woodland animals and insects, as well as replace trees lost following the severe storm damage last month.

19.12.13 SOUTHWARK NEWS – In Southwark are two of London’s most accident-heavy Underground stations – London Bridge and Waterloo. Over the past five years there have been 1,400 injuries at the stations, over half of which have occurred on escalators. Figures show that accidents have been rising steadily since 2008. In 2009 there were 91 injuries, but by 2012 the number had risen to 139.

19.12.13 EVENING STANDARD – The annual rise in Underground and bus fares has been delayed by two weeks. Season tickets and Travelcards had been set to go up by 4.1% on 3 January. After George Osborne capped fares at the rate of inflation, the rise had to be changed to 3.1%. TfL claimed the resulting delay could cost £14M.

19.12.13 EVENING STANDARD – *Text from Colin Laverick* – “Ever wonder why it takes so long for Central Line train doors to open? It’s because the drivers are having a laugh at tourists frantically pressing the superfluous green door buttons to get out”.

20.12.13 METRO – As the final art commission of the Underground’s 150th anniversary year, the new edition of the Pocket Tube Map, will have a cover by artist Imran Qureshi. Entitled “All Time Would Be Perpetual Spring”, Qureshi has used the techniques of traditional Mughal miniature painting from his native Pakistan to present an intricate floral design for each line on the network, inspired by their distinctive colours.

23.12.13 METRO – More space and step-free access when interchanging are among plans for Tottenham Hale Underground station. The improvements include doubling the size of the current ticket hall and installing new ticket gates. This will reduce crowding at the station, saving passengers time when changing trains between Greater Anglia and Underground services. Subject to approval, work is expected to start in 2015 and will take approximately 18 months to complete.

The Compiler wishes to thank all the various contributors (including Australia) for their material for including in the From The Papers section.