

PRESS CUTTINGS FROM THE PAST

The following is a selection of press cuttings taken from scrapbooks compiled by Desmond Croome. Although a date is given, the actual publication is often not the same.

17.09.32 – “Train Starting Device”. The rule obtaining on the Metropolitan Railway for the transmission of a “permission to start” signal from guard to driver provides that the platform staff shall first indicate by hand signal to the guard that the train is ready. The guard then ascertains that the starting signal is off before waving his green flag to the driver. At stations where the platforms are on a curve there is necessarily some difficulty and, at times, delay in carrying out these movements. Especially is this so when the position in which the driver stands is not immediately adjacent to the platform, because in such cases he had to move across the cab to the platform side to watch for this signal.

In order to obviate any delays therefore, it was considered that some improved means of conveying the guard’s message to the driver should be developed. Several experiments were carried out, and eventually a device, which has been standardised throughout the system, was decided upon. This provides for the giving of both a visual and audible signal to the driver. The visual signal is in the form of an illuminated letter ‘S’ 3in deep, which is usually affixed just beneath the platform starting signal. The audible signal is given by means of a 6in bell, situated on the platform, as near as possible to the point at which the head of the train usually comes to rest. In addition there is a 4in sheep gong, also fixed on the platform, but in this case near to the point at which the rear of the train comes to rest, its purpose is to indicate to the guard that the apparatus is functioning properly.

The electrical control of the visual and audible signals is by means of two wires known as the “ringing wires”. These are suspended 8ft above platform level and 2ft from the edge of it. The supports may be fixed to the platform covering and where there is no canopy, posts are used. The end of the guard’s flagstaff is fitted with a brass or copper ferrule, about 6in in length. This is to enable him to close the electrical circuit by placing the metallised end of the flagstaff across the “ringing wires”. The circuit is so arranged that the starting device is inoperative unless the starting signal is in the proceed position.

When a train is ready to leave the platform the guard reaches up and places the ferruled end of his staff across the suspended wires. This closes an electrical circuit and if the starting signal is ‘off’ the letter ‘S’ on the signal post is illuminated, and both bells ring. They continue to ring only while the circuit is closed but the letter ‘S’ remains illuminated until the train has passed the starting signal, when the latter goes automatically to danger and the ‘S’ sign is extinguished. Power for operating the platform starting device is usually taken from the signalling supply circuit, being converted to direct current by metal disc rectifiers. The arrangement is now in use at all important stations on the Metropolitan Railway.

21.12.53 EVENING NEWS – “First steps in Great London Tube Scheme”. London Transport engineers have begun preliminary survey work on the new “Tottenham Tube”, which has been accepted by the government as a first priority when development becomes available. The task of preparing a report on the cost of the 18 miles of track between Croydon and Tottenham is likely to take several months. In 1946 the cost of boring and equipping a mile of tunnel was estimated at £2m but today that figure is £3m. The line will be built in two parts, the first of which would link Walthamstow with Victoria. The second section to Croydon will follow later.

21.12.53 EVENING NEWS – “New rush-hour tube seats”. London Transport today began trying out a “rush-hour bench seat” on the Northern Line. A car has been fitted with four L-shaped bench seats alongside the sliding doors. Each replaces a two-passenger seat, but gives instead a rush-hour “perch” for three passengers and in addition provides four extra square feet of standing room. As a result the car is able to take 16 extra passengers.

10.01.55 EVENING NEWS – “Mayfair is such a working class area”. Because the number of Underground passengers at Green Park is nearly 10m a year, London Transport are to build an extra escalator to help rush hour travellers. It should be working by August. The number of passengers is half as much again as it was pre-war, largely because of continued business development in the Mayfair area.

24.02.55 – “New Tube may not be built”. Fears that the new London Tube (from Victoria – by way of the West End – to Walthamstow) may not be built because of the vast financial problems involved were

expressed in the Commons last night. If all the problems of the 11½-mile tube were overcome, it could be open to traffic within five years of work starting. The cost, including rolling stock, would be about £50m.

03.08.55 EVENING NEWS – “Woman among five hurt in tube crash”. Five people were injured in an Underground train crash at Aldwych station today. Firemen had to force their way through the two-car train on the Holborn – Aldwych shuttle service to rescue the driver who was trapped in his cab when the train hit the buffers. Three passengers and the guard were helped out of the badly damaged front coach by rescuers. *(The article includes a photograph of the rear [undamaged] end of the train just inside the tunnel at Aldwych, and clearly shows it was a 1935 flat-fronted train, with its ‘square’ headlights. In many ways, this end tunnel wall collision pre-dated the two similar incidents at Tooting Broadway siding and the Moorgate collision on 28 February 1975. Ed.)*

11.04.56 – “Explosion halts the tubes”. An explosion at Lots Road power station, Chelsea, yesterday injured two men and stranded thousands of afternoon Underground travellers for periods up to 20 minutes. Trains stopped on several lines and at Aldwych station 12 people were trapped in the lift.

31.07.56 – “Guards need not explain to passengers – Rail delay Rule”. Motormen and guards on the London Underground are not obliged to keep passengers informed when delays occur. This is stated in a report, published yesterday, of an enquiry into a crash between two trains at Bromley-by-Bow on 1 December. A crowded train from Acton Town to Upminster, which was moved under handbrake control into Bromley station, collided at low speed with the rear of the Wimbledon – Upminster train, causing minor injuries to 44 of the 800 passengers. The Acton train had stopped for 2½ hours because of a hold-up. Referring to the criticism that passengers were not informed, Col. W.P. Reed who conducted the enquiry said that during such an exceptionally long stoppage it would have been common sense to inform the passengers if it were possible. London Transport said that information about delays was normally given at stations A driver’s duty is not to tell passengers of the progress of the delay but to ensure the train’s safety. This also applied to the guard.

01.02.57 – “Full Time Watch on Tube Lifts”. An electrical fitter is now on duty at Hampstead tube station while the two high-speed lifts are working in the 181ft shaft – London’s deepest. The Commons were told last night after a complaint that 21 passengers were stuck in one lift for half an hour on 1 January.

08.01.57 – Letter from R.S. Baker, Wembley: “Conditions on the Bakerloo Line are becoming intolerable. A man fainted in the crush this week. Girls suffer damage to stockings. Often doors cannot close because people are so tightly packed in. Sensible supervision at the gates would prevent conditions which would not be allowed for cattle”.

28.05.57 EVENING NEWS – “Two Travolators – and work will start next month”. Two Travolators are to be installed at Bank station the Southern Region announced today. Preliminary work will start next month. The Travolators – an American device similar to the escalator, but having a flat surface so that passengers can walk along while it is moving – will operate side by side. Platforms will be lengthened to give access to a 300ft tunnel which will be built to accommodate the Travolators. No official estimate of the cost is available but it is expected to be between £750,000 and £1m. Though the [train] journey takes only four minutes, it often takes twice that time to get from the platform to Bank Underground station level..

29.05.57 DAILY TELEGRAPH – “Moving paths for station – Bank speed-up”. Two moving ‘pavements’ are to be installed at Bank station for passengers using the Waterloo & City Line. Preliminary work will begin early next month but the devices are not expected to be completed for several years.

08.06.57 DAILY TELEGRAPH – “Crash jet derails train 400 yards away”. A train 400 yards away was derailed when a Hawker Hunter jet fighter crashed after a mid-air collision near the London Transport Central Line at North Weald yesterday. One of them dived to earth 400 yards from the line where a steam train was approaching. The blast buckled the lines. The engine was pushing two coaches along the single track from Epping when the first coach left the track. The pilot was killed and three passengers on the train were taken to hospital although their condition was not serious.

01.08.58 – “Electrification of Met. Line”. Work has started on London Transport’s scheme to electrify the 10-mile stretch of the Metropolitan Line from Rickmansworth to Amersham and Chesham. It is due to be completed in the summer of 1960, when electric trains will run right through from the City to

Amersham, 28 miles away for the first time. When the electrification is finished Amersham will become the new terminus of the Metropolitan Line instead of Aylesbury. The service to Aylesbury will be taken over by British Railways from Marylebone.

20.09.57 – “The biggest substation on the Underground”. London Transport’s new £350,000 electricity substation at Charing Cross – the biggest on the Underground – is now in partial operation. Saturday night saw the last three big ‘switchovers’ by London Transport cable staff on successive weekends. This task marked the completion of the first stage in bringing this important new installation into operation. It is now relaying current from Greenwich generating station to the District Line. The new substation will later feed the Bakerloo and Northern lines as well as the District. It should be in full service by the end of the year.

18.07.58 – More seats are being provided for on the Epping – Ongar service on the Central Line. One of the two-car shuttle trains running on this six-mile section was lengthened to three cars at the beginning of the month. The second shuttle train will be similarly lengthened in the near future.

22.08.58 – “£10m train order”. The British Transport Commission has approved the placing of orders by London Transport for 76 seven-car trains for the Piccadilly Line at a cost of £10,120,000. The cars will be delivered between the autumn of 1959 and summer 1962. A further order is shortly to be placed for prototypes of new rolling stock for the Central Line.

06.02.59 – Within the next few days 64 coin-operated luggage lockers will come into use at Baker Street station, just inside the main entrance to the Bakerloo Line. Passengers pay 6d and have the use of the locker for 24 hours.

06.02.59 – The District Line branch between Acton Town and South Acton will be closed after 28 February 1959 for economy reasons. Buses on route 55 provide an alternative service.

12.03.59 – “Smoking ban in tubes predicted”. A ban on smoking in tube trains is possible according to Dr. L.G. Norman, London Transport Executive’s chief medical officer. He addressed the Royal Society of Health in London yesterday. In his view public opinion would gradually harden against smoking in public places until, as in some other countries, no smoking was permitted on the Underground. Dr. Norman disclosed that the Executive had set up a research team to investigate the desirability of increasing the no-smoking accommodation from 30 per cent to 50 percent. Smoking was a matter of individual choice. In public it may be offensive and may perhaps be harmful to others. A London Transport spokesman said “if we find that the public wants more non-smoking cars, we will think about it. We have no plans for a ban on smoking on the Underground”.

26.10.59 DAILY TELEGRAPH – “Fire closes Tube station – Trains halted”. Fire last night closed the White City station on the Metropolitan Line. Trains were unable to pass by the burning platforms. The fire started in electrical apparatus on the eastbound platform. The outbreak was under control in a relatively short time.

05.09.63 – “Over the Station Plan for Olympia”. Plans to build a big entertainment and shopping centre over Olympia Underground station have been sent to the LCC. This ambitious scheme includes a hotel and residential block. It will involve building a raft over both the station and rail tracks for a large area stretching from Kensington High Street with Russell Road as its boundary. The cost of the scheme was not yet known.

26.05.65 EVENING NEWS AND STAR – “Hole in road stops trains and traffic”. A hole big enough to swallow a bus stopped trains and traffic in Tottenham today. The hole gaped open in Ferry Lane as hundreds of workers in buses, cars and on foot made their way to factories during the rush hour. Tons of concrete paving and road surfacing crashed down into a cavern near a waterworks lake and new Victoria Line workings. A 15ft wall beside the road bulges and threatened to topple onto the adjoining Barking – Kentish Town railway line.

Eastern Region of British Rail said, “For the rest of the day, including tonight’s rush hour, services as shown in the timetable will operate between Kentish Town and South Tottenham and between Blackhorse Road and Barking. There will be special connecting buses between South Tottenham and Blackhorse Road until the evening peak when passengers will have to use London Transport bus services to travel between these two points”. Engineers estimated it would take at least a day to fill the hole.