

EAST LONDON LINE POST-CLOSURE NOTES – 2

by John Thomason

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These notes continue on from those published in *Underground News* No.555 [March 2008].

The inappropriate “Continuing your journey from Shoreditch” poster displayed at Rotherhithe was replaced with the correct one on 26 January. An improved poster advising passengers how to travel to other ELL stations was first seen at Canada Water on the same day. Unfortunately there was an error (ELP instead of ELW) that had to be locally amended – I hope that it will be reprinted as some non-amended copies have been seen displayed. [The corrected poster was first seen on 12 February]. Details of Tower Hamlets’ shopping bus to Surrey Quays are now posted outside Wapping station.

During the night of 27/28 January the palisade fence [and explanatory poster board] erected in the Canada Water ticket hall paid area was removed. This fence had been used to block off access to the ELL northbound and was used as a compound to store building materials. These materials had been used to construct a segregated route connecting the escalators from the west end of the Jubilee platforms to those from the ticket hall to the northbound ELL. This route was brought into use in time for the evening peak on 28 January and will relieve the congestion that had built up at the east end Jubilee escalators most evening peaks. It was possible to note that all platform displays and signs along the route had been removed and replaced by exit/fire exit decals and Jubilee line route direction signs. The fixed staircase route from the Jubilee line via the ELL southbound platform was brought back into use that morning. The southbound platform was walled off in a similar manner to the northbound. The whole of the area brought back into use was given a deep clean that Sunday night. The escalator route was then withdrawn from service on 11 February to facilitate escalator overhaul work but the fixed staircases remain available.

The ELP bus continues with minimal patronage during off-peak hours, rising to as many as five at peak hours but on one occasion a large youth group boarded to travel to Rotherhithe Youth Hostel and the driver agreed to stop at the [381/C10] stop opposite rather than them walking back about 500m. The ELW and ELC buses continue to carry reasonable numbers but many former users of the trains have found alternative routes. Some drivers of ELC buses use the 47 bus route [Redriff Road and Surrey Quays Road] between Surrey Quays and Canada Water rather than Lower Road, this is often quicker at peak hours. The many students travelling from east London to Goldsmiths [at New Cross] now appear to use the DLR to Deptford Bridge. Goldsmiths College Student Union is running a campaign to “ensure we reach our ultimate goal – compensation from TfL for the disruption in form of reduced [rate] travel to London Bridge for all Goldsmiths’ students!” The Tower Hamlets’ bus from Wapping to Surrey Quays Shopping Centre continues with modest levels of use. The driver of that bus reports that there have been several fraudulent attempts [by non-Tower Hamlets’ residents] to obtain permits to travel. The ELP bus stop at Culling Circus [Rotherhithe Tunnel] regained its ‘X’ on 4 February.

The Customer Service Assistants were withdrawn from 5 February. A poster-sized ELP timetable was first seen outside Rotherhithe station in mid-February. The lack of a realistic cross-river connection continues to cause problems to some. The spring 2008 issue of *Surrey Docks News*, the news-sheet of Southwark Conservatives, solicits opinion about a foot and cycle bridge crossing the Thames from Surrey Docks [wherever that is] to an unspecified location. [Sustrans is currently proposing a £65-million link between Durand's Wharf (Rotherhithe Street) and the Impounding Lock on Westferry Road]. It is an amusing exercise to consult the TfL on-line journey planner for a journey from Rotherhithe station to Wapping station and back; some remarkable routes are proposed.

Your reporter's fortnightly visit to a low-cost German supermarket on 5 February saw him visiting Trundleys Road footbridge. (*Trundleys Road footbridge connects Trundleys Terrace with Oldfield Grove, close to Deptford Road Junction. Deptford Road was the original name of what became Surrey Docks and then Surrey Quays station*). Work in the vicinity to establish a work-base (the Silwood site) giving the ability to bring in track materials by road and scrap out was now complete. It was possible to observe about 60-70 workers on the ground engaged in recovery of conductor rails. The gangs had reached Surrey Quays sub-station and lengths of scrap rail were being loaded on to lorries. Several specialised road-rail vehicles were facilitating this work. About 10 bogie MLA wagons were seen, most bearing the Underground logo. Many showed evidence of Metronet branding but are part of the GB Railfreight inventory – these wagons were delivered by road. Two small diesel locos could be seen in the distance on the northbound track but their identity could not be determined. The four Clayton battery locos were in the head shunt.



The four battery locomotives that were built for the Waterloo & City Line refurbishment are now at work on the East London Line and "Walter" is seen (*left*) shunting at Deptford Road Junction on 27 March 2008 on the newly built connection to the northbound East London Line at top right of photograph.

Cope Street, which crosses the ELL just to the south of Surrey Quays station, was noted to be closed with hoarding erected either side of the overbridge. It was unclear what work was to be done but ELLX posters were displayed.

South London Press for 4 February reports that commuters are being packed in to overcrowded trains after the closure of the East London Line. Passengers have

described nearly passing out because of the cramped conditions. The Forest Hill line – which runs through Brockley, Sydenham, Honor Oak Park and New Cross Gate – is bearing the brunt of extra passengers after the ELL closed for two years for a major upgrade. Residents welcomed the improvement plans but feared it would lead to overcrowding. A spokesman for Southern said: “This line was extremely crushed before the East London line closure and we made provision to increase capacity by the addition of more rolling stock. In fact, between 2005 and 2006 Southern added 14 per cent capacity to this route and 20 per cent extra passengers got on the trains. It was a classic case of supply and demand. The more capacity you provide, the more people use the service”.

A stroll about on 6 February revealed much activity south of Surrey Quays. At New Cross station a gang of about 20 men and women were digging out ballast samples at defined spots and bagging them. At New Cross Gate station the track had been removed south of the former fixed red lights, to give access for road vehicles to prepare the track bed for reinstatement of the connection to the main line. The cable troughs were protected by an ingenious arrangement of sheet pile material and sleepers forming a protective cover, then blinded with gravel. Lorry loads of two-ton crane counter weights were being delivered to the flyover bridge work site. This bridge is scheduled to be launched on 10/11 May. Many different trades are at work on the site and work proceeds apace to prepare the flyover supports, depot and staff buildings. Best views are obtained from passing trains – little can be seen from the limited public vantage points in the area. At Canal Junction piles of concrete sleepers were noted stacked along the track and there was a large stack of new rail nearby. An access for road-rail vehicles was noted near the South-East London Combined Heat & Power Plant utilising the long closed track access to Rotherhithe Road Carriage Sidings that had never been fully recovered.

Construction News for 18 February reports that London Underground has advertised the contract to look after the £800 million East London Railway, which is currently being built by a Balfour Beatty/Carillion joint venture for completion in September 2009. The winning bidder will start maintenance work in January 2009, to allow a period of dual running with the joint venture while it carries out testing work. Under an initial seven-year deal the successful bidder will look after the section of the railway between New Cross and Dalston Junction, although the area covered could be extended north to Highbury and Islington during the tender. London Underground has left the door open for the contract to be extended to ten years if successful, but will reduce it to just five years if the winning firm fails to live up to the requirements of the contract. The reference to London Underground seems strange but LUL will be responsible for the infrastructure along the former ELL and the Broad Street viaduct alignment.

Metro for 21 February announced the withdrawal of the ELP bus on Saturday 23 February. We read that less than 200 people per day use the service [an average load under two!] and that the 381 bus route is to have an enhanced service on Monday to Fridays between Canada Water and London Bridge. Underground tickets will be accepted on the 381 between Surrey Quays/Canada Water/Rotherhithe/Bermondsey. Similar information also appeared on bus stops, station posters and within the buses the same day. The posters told us that the information booklet would be reissued in March. It appears that tickets will not be accepted on the C10 bus or the N381. What will happen to Oyster PAYG customers is a mystery. This all followed on from a local campaign to open up the ELP to an

all-stops service to relieve congestion on the Rotherhithe peninsula. It has also been reported that the ELC service is to be revised in the morning peak to slightly reduce the frequency from every 5-6 minutes to every 6 minutes and that the ELW is to acquire new buses – these changes are to take effect from 3 March. In the event the ELC timetable was modified to improve reliability and need two fewer vehicles. A revised poster version of the map in the centre of *All change on the East London line* was displayed on Saturday 23 February. The ELP service had been removed and the hatched orange route replaced with black lines and 381 next to the bus symbol. The last day of the ELP (Saturday) saw greatly increased loadings – most passengers had cameras and notebooks. All evidence of the route's existence was removed from stops during that day. Canada Water station posters were amended with marker pen to await the new issues that were first seen on Monday 25 February. A 381 bus was seen on 28 February showing Special Service – your writer boarded one on 29 February and the driver confirmed that the enhanced service buses showed Special Service on the destination blind and via Rotherhithe on the side blind but this practice died out within a few days when actual destinations were shown.

Southwark News during February reported that TfL London Rail has been asked by local residents to consider reverting the name of Surrey Quays station to the original (*sic*) name of Surrey Docks while the East London Line is being extended for conversion to London Overground. Consultation with the wider community is expected this summer. This is an initiative of Surrey Docks' councillors.

TfL Board papers for February report that The East London Line officially ceased to be a London Underground line on 22 January, when they handed it over to contractors. This seems to be the time when [closed] stations acquired "Security Guard/Dog Patrol" notices on their exteriors together with London Overground "What is happening" posters. We also read that the Thameslink Programme will result in fewer terminating platforms being available at London Bridge from the start of construction work in 2012. As a result, London Bridge will have less capacity. The current South London Line (SLL) service, which runs between London Bridge and Victoria, is very likely to be removed from London Bridge – this is most unsatisfactory and requires mitigation. ELL Phase 2 will provide a 4tph service along the SLL between Clapham Junction and Dalston Junction assisting delivery of the Thameslink Programme as a link to the Docklands (via Canada Water) and City (via Shoreditch High Street Station) is retained. A report detailing the benefits of ELL Phase 2 for the Thameslink Programme has been prepared and funding discussions have commenced.

First GB Railfreight is transporting materials on the East London Line under a 10-month contract. The work involves delivering new rail and concrete sleepers and removing the old track panels and ballast. To that end, three Ruston LSSH low-height diesel hydraulic shunters, formerly with the MOD Army, have been acquired from Knights Rail Services. They were delivered by road to the Silwood site following overhaul at Eastleigh works, as follows:

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| 01509 | "Vulcan" | 15.01.08 |
| 01583 | "Valiant" | 31.01.08 |
| 01507 | "Venom" | 14.02.08 |



Above: Looking south-east from Trundleys Road footbridge on 27 March 2008, one of the Ruston diesel locomotives is seen on the left of the photograph on the northbound East London Line while various wagons, without a locomotive, are seen on the southbound. Much of the conductor rail in this area has been removed. The structure on the flat wagon is a rudimentary “guard’s van” incorporating a brake setter and air horn (to assist propelling movements).

At a Railway Civil Engineers’ Association meeting in late February some information came to light. Slab track will be used throughout the tunnel section [presumably Surrey Quays to Whitechapel – the Thames Tunnel is already slab track]. Secondary means of escape will be provided at original stations by staircases. These are to be located at the opposite ends of the stations to the existing access/egress except at Shadwell where the staircases to the former station building will be rebuilt and bought back into use. MIP lift provision is in doubt at Shadwell, Wapping, Rotherhithe and Surrey Quays on grounds of cost and/or feasibility. However provision at Whitechapel will be provided in association with Crossrail, a footbridge will also be provided at the north end of the ELR platforms for congestion relief to the southbound platform. The depot at New Cross Gate will be equipped with a wheel lathe and a 25kV overhead line test facility to enable dual-voltage Overground units to be serviced. Stock will be washed every second day with rainwater and recycled water. A 132kV bulk power supply to the line will be provided near Canal Junction. Passive provision will be made to enable a single-track

connection along the former Dalston Eastern Junction alignment if required at a later date. Shoreditch High Street station and nearby track will be totally enclosed in a protective box to facilitate commercial development above, below and around without impinging on the railway.

New Cross Gate platform 1 (the ELL platform) has had a hoarding erected along its entire length to separate the ELL from the public. It is painted dark green and has inspection windows at regular intervals – this was first seen on 4 March. Bundles of short lengths of scrap conductor rail have been used to secure the hoarding to the platform without fastenings. Local residents are complaining about the vibration, noise and dust that they are being subjected to. A TV news report on 10 March showed some impressive cracking allegedly caused by depot construction work. Housing was built in recent years on former railway land nearby.

The March edition of the Tube Map shows bus 381 replacing ELP and the removal of the not-yet-open extended ELL, which appeared on the January and February issues. The replacement booklet for *All change on the East London Line* was reissued in March. First reported as available from Piccadilly Circus Travel Enquiry Office in early March copies were not seen at ELL stations until Easter. The format is similar to before but now entitled *East London Line alternative routes Important changes to travel information*. The cover is flashed in blue, March 2008 Update, and the alternative route map is now a foldout last page. This map is different from that displayed on the poster mentioned above as it shows 381/N381 between Surrey Quays and Bermondsey. There is also advice regarding interchange at Bank/Monument but this has been overtaken by events with the suspension of interchange between the Bank complex and Monument from 31 March 2008. Oyster Pre Pay users of 381 and N381 buses between Surrey Quays/Canada Water/Rotherhithe/Bermondsey, are told that they will be charged 90p for a journey and are advised to consider a Travelcard. Thumbnails of stations have been modified to reflect local changes. The route map of the ELLX and background information is omitted. The Overground branded ELC bus stop decals were replaced in early-March with new decals in yellow rather than orange, and branded Underground.

Docklands 24 for 12 March reports the demise of the ELP bus under the heading “Ghost buses get the axe,” further reporting suggests that the ELW should suffer a similar fate and the displaced [double-deck] vehicles used to strengthen the [single-deck] 100 and D3.

TfL Board papers for March advise that one part of the East London Line construction schedule has been extended by 13 days to allow Crossrail-protection works to be carried out at Whitechapel so that the [ELR] line can stay open during Crossrail construction. The ELR Operational Building Complex [part of the New Cross Gate Depot site] will be “available for use by employees” from December.

Enquiries concerning the enamel wall panels at Whitechapel, Shadwell, Wapping and Rotherhithe confirm that the panels will largely remain in place but where removed for construction work will be reinstalled. The old Shoreditch station building is still in situ. Its future has not yet been promulgated but local opinion is that it will become a community centre. Your reporter is not so sure.

As at 14 February, all trackbed bridges between Dalston and Old Street have been renewed or refurbished. Three arches of the viaduct immediately north of Lee Street were demolished some time ago because of their condition and fortuitously were at

the site of Haggerston station where building work is now in progress. At the Bishopsgate goods yard site some nondescript work on Shoreditch High Street station can be seen as can the new 350 tonne, 35m long bowstring arch bridge that will cross Shoreditch High Street. The bridge manufactured by Fairfield Mabeys has been assembled on site and was lifted in on 29 March using a 1,200 tonne crane. A (discontinuous) web cam feed was provided for the curious. Bus users in the area were advised that diversions via Old Street station could add 40-minutes to their journey. In the event work proceeded so well that the road was reopened on 30 March, earlier than scheduled.

Pedley Street is closed off and a girder bridge is being built on it to cross the Liverpool Street main lines. The new structure is an 84m span Warren-truss Bridge assembled on site by Fairfield-Mabeys. The bridge will be launched during a 50-hour closure starting 4 May 2008. The launch method will use a self propelled vehicle at the back end of the bridge while the front end will be pulled across the Main Line by jacking against steel cables fixed into the brick abutment on the opposite side. The concrete deck will be only 45% complete during launching to act as a counterweight at the back end until the launch reaches the western abutment. The lower soffit of the bridge is constructed of weathering steel that requires very little maintenance. This solution is particularly suitable as overhead line equipment will be located close to the deck underside. However, the remainder of the structure is built from standard steel. This was a requirement of the maintainer, the reason was that any graffiti removal by grit blast method would strip away the protective layer of surface rust formed on weathering steels.

Docklands 24 for 19 March reports that the Tower Hamlets' shopping bus is to be expanded to operate on Saturdays from 5 April. Operating times from Wapping are at 10.00, 11.00, 12.00, 14.00, 15.00 and 16.00, with return journeys leaving Surrey Quays at 10.30, 11.30, 12.30, 14.30, 15.30 and 16.30. This follows a deal between [Tower Hamlets'] Town Hall and City Hall bosses after pressure from residents that they were left isolated while the Underground line was being rebuilt and extended. This service is still restricted to Tower Hamlets' residents – Southwark residents are forced to take the great circular tour! A new, larger vehicle was first seen in use for the shopping bus on 12 March; a destination display is now fitted and loadings are buoyant. *Docklands 24* further reports that London Assembly Member John Biggs has been campaigning for better bus connections while the [EL] line is out. He wants buses laid on from Wapping to Canary Wharf, Liverpool Street and London Bridge rather than just to Whitechapel.

Reports persist that New Cross depot will be converted to a nature/wildlife park. Means of access and security are unclear – the site is track locked – the depot has no road access. Pedestrian access was via a train stopping at the staff platform or through a door in a wall in Edward Street, up steep steps and across the track. Another report suggests that the depot is to be demolished and allowed to return to nature. But there is a further report that Metronet has been instructed to maintain the depot in good order, pending possible use as stabling sidings. Many years ago it was earmarked for storage of the heritage fleet. It seems that plans are fluid.

A contractor site track plan of the ELR shows that the scissors crossover at the south end of Whitechapel will be removed and a new scissors will be provided just north of Shadwell. The single crossover to the north of Surrey Quays will go and be replaced by a scissors at the south end of Canada Water. It has been reported that St Mary's Curve will be relayed as a single-track non-electrified connection to give access for

infrastructure maintenance so a new scissors nearer Shadwell is logical. A scissors crossover at Canada Water will assist with stock moves to and from the new depot so it all makes sense.

The Brunel Museum at Rotherhithe reports that temporary closure of the East London Line for refurbishment and upgrade means that the Museum can expand. When the line reopens as part of the East London Railway there will be a new Museum above. Contractors Balfour Beatty Carillion are working closely with TfL to install a floor at the bottom of the shaft. It is believed that this will incorporate a glass “window” to give sight of the railway below. [The shaft is the original shaft sunk on the Rotherhithe side of the river to enable construction of the tunnel]. With the support of the Mayor of London they will create a new Visitor Centre above an operating railway.

The March issue of *East London Line News* reports a number of interesting pieces of information. Concrete pumping sites will be established at Durward Street and Raven Row for Whitechapel. The area enclosed by Morris Street, Chapman Street, Sheridan Street and Watney Street for Shadwell, Tesco’s car park for Canada Water. Use will also be made of vent shafts for access [these are between Surrey Quays and Canada Water, also between Wapping and Shadwell]. The New Cross Gate maintenance depot steel work has been erected. A Project Timeline is included with the following dates:

- March – removal of bridge at Surrey Canal Road.
- April – Dalston station steel construction begins, Haggerston station foundations completed.
- May – Bridge work (reported above).
- June – Foundation works at Whitechapel, finish floor of Shoreditch High Street bridge, track laying at New Cross [Gate] depot.
- July – Haggerston station concrete track base, Hoxton station completion of platforms and canopy.
- August – Cold Blow Lane re-opens, fitting out of New Cross Gate depot, Brick Lane re-opens.



Three photographs taken on 27 March 2008 show the situation at the north end of Surrey Quays station (*left*). The crossover rains in situ for the time being but all conductor rail has been removed. The photo (*below, left*) looks north from Rotherhithe New Road to the Cope Street bridge, now closed off while that (*below, right*) looks in the opposite direction with Surrey Docks substation on the right and the ELL tracks on the left. Despite Surrey Docks station being renamed Surrey Quays nearly 20 years ago, the (now decommissioned) substation remained named *Surrey Docks*.

All ELL photos: Brian Hardy

