

THE UNDERGROUND (DIARY) AND THE CORONAVIRUS

DECEMBER 2020

Tuesday 1 December kicked off with Marble Arch station remaining closed from the start of traffic because of escalator defects and not opening for business until 14.10. A signal failure on the southbound at Chalfont & Latimer from 06.15 caused the Metropolitan Line to be suspended north of Rickmansworth. Services resumed to Amersham at 07.20 and to Chesham at 08.00. One Up (southbound) Chiltern train was stalled approaching Chalfont until 07.05. A Network Rail signal failure at Kenton suspended the Bakerloo Line north of Queen's Park from 13.00 until 13.50. Another Network Rail signal failure – at Wimbledon – initially resulted in the District Line service being thinned out west of Parsons Green from 15.30, but then suspended west thereof from 16.10 to 17.30. A SPAD by an eastbound District Line train approaching High Street Kensington at 17.10 added a further 20-minute delay to an already disrupted service, causing a similar delay to the outer rail Circle Line. The trains cancelled for no serviceable stock on the District Line reached eight and five on the C&H in the morning peak, all because of defective handsets.

There were two late starts to services on **Wednesday 2 December**. The first, on the District Line, was the suspension of services at the west end of the line and to Edgware Road because of a late finish to work on points at Triangle Sidings. This required current to remain off, which embraced the Earl's Court area, thus preventing movement there too. Services began at 06.00. However, 19 trains were cancelled for the morning peak, 13 for the original incident and six for defective stock. Also suspended from the start of traffic was the Bakerloo Line north of Queen's Park because of a late finish to Network Rail engineering, with services beginning at 06.10. Once trains populated the area, southbound trains began at 06.30. Smoke from underneath a southbound train at Kennington at 10.15 suspended the southbound City branch of the Northern Line. The train moved off to Oval at 11.00 with services resuming at 11.05. Kennington station was closed for the duration. Signals failing between King's Cross and Farringdon on the eastbound from 12.50 caused Circle and Hammersmith & City Line services to work through under failure conditions, with the Metropolitan Line suspended into the City until 15.05.

Euston Square was unable to open from the start of traffic on **Thursday 3 December** because of a local power failure, opening for business at 05.55. The station closed again from 07.10 to 07.30 because of a fire alarm activation. Just before 09.00, a westbound Hammersmith & City Line train stalled as it arrived at Whitechapel, suspending services through the area until 09.40. One westbound District Line train was stalled approaching Whitechapel for the duration. Defective lighting necessitated South Kenton station closing from 16.40 until 17.05. A loss of station lighting caused Dagenham Heathway to close from 19.55 to 20.20 and again from 22.20 to 22.45.

The only incident of note on **Friday 4 December** was that a lack of lighting caused Northwood Hills station to close from 16.35 until 17.45.

On **Saturday 5 December**, a signal failure on the eastbound at Farringdon at 07.00 caused the Metropolitan Line to be suspended into the City from 07.45 to 08.40, with C&H services working through under failure conditions. With the Northern Line suspended between Charing Cross and Kennington for weekend engineering work, points failing at Charing Cross from 09.25 suspended the service further, between Mornington Crescent and Charing Cross. Once a piece of defective equipment had been replaced, services resumed at 12.05. With the return of crowd-attended football matches, for safety reasons, Fulham Broadway station was closed from 21.15 until 22.20, while West Brompton and Parsons Green operated exit-only mode during the same period. An altercation between passengers on a southbound Northern Line train at Euston (Charing Cross branch) caused a 20-minute delay from 23.05 but the Charing Cross branch platforms remained closed until 23.40. An informed source tells us that the incident was because of certain passengers not wearing masks! The inclined lift at Greenford stalled in the shaft at 23.45, trapping those within for 30 minutes.

There were two incidents of note on **Sunday 6 December**, both approaching the end of traffic. First was the last westbound Central Line train to Ealing Broadway, which was delayed at Oxford Circus at 23.50 after traction current had been switched off in error. This required the special "line clear" procedure to be implemented in case any overnight workers had already accessed the track with current being off. The train was able to depart at 00.50, an hour late. The second incident was at Golders

Green at midnight, with a passenger refusing to leave a southbound terminating train. It wasn't possible to 'run round' the incident train because the middle platform was already occupied by a defective train, having earlier run over dislodged tunnel telephone wires north of Chalk Farm. With police intervention and offending passenger removed, trains were able to move off to depot from 00.35 along with trains that had been queued at platform north of Golders Green.

On Monday 7 December, a multiple signal failure on the eastbound at Barking at 05.45 suspended the District Line east of Barking with Hammersmith & City services reduced in consequence. Although services resumed at 06.25, a signal failure on the eastbound approach to Earl's Court from the Olympia branch caused two trains to become stalled until 07.20. Ealing and Richmond services were delayed while technical staff rectified the problem. Also from 06.25, a wrong signal offered to a westbound District Line train between South Kensington and Gloucester Road was accepted, with the train arriving in platform 2 at Gloucester Road. It was then piloted to High Street Kensington and reversed back to its booked destination. In the meantime, a defect in one of the signalling buttons in Earl's Court control room meant that the following Circle Line train could only be signalled into platform 1 at 06.50 and the following District Line train into platform 2. Side by side, the crews changed over (known in the trade as a "stock and crew" changeover). Once the signalling control button had been repaired, services resumed at 06.55. Signals failing on the northbound local line in the Preston Road area at 12.00 caused northbound trains to be diverted via the fast line, the two intermediate stations this being served only by southbound trains. Watford/Chesham/Amersham trains resumed normal working at 12.30 and Uxbridge trains at 13.00. A fire alarm activation at Hammersmith C&H caused the station to close from 14.45, with trains terminating their passengers at Goldhawk Road and running empty to and from Hammersmith. The station reopened at 15.10. Late in the evening, North Greenwich station closed because insufficient staff, remaining so until the end of traffic.

Tuesday 8 December began with a Circle Line train becoming gapped off current as it exited Hammersmith Sidings at 04.40, preventing C&H services between Hammersmith and Edgware Road from starting up until 07.10 with 11 trains then cancelled in consequence. Also at the start of traffic, Chancery Lane station remained closed until 06.50 because of insufficient staff (and closed again for the same reason from 22.30 until the end of traffic). A points failure at Rayners Lane at 05.30 suspended the Piccadilly Line west of South Harrow and caused delays for the Metropolitan Line, two trains being stalled approaching the station for some 15 minutes, one on the east and one on the westbound. The service resumed at 07.35, only to be suspended again from 09.40 to 10.55 with a repeat failure. The continuing stock non-availability on the District Line caused 11 trains to be cancelled for the morning peak. Points failing at Ealing Broadway suspended the Ealing branch of the Central Line from 16.20 for an hour. Two trains stalled west of West Acton were authorised to return there in turn, arriving at 16.40 and 16.55.

Insufficient staff caused Chancery Lane station to remain closed until 07.00 on **Wednesday 9 December**. Also from the start of traffic, a cracked rail on the westbound District and Circle lines approaching South Kensington resulted in a temporary speed restriction being imposed. Cancellations because of defective stock was enough to ease the flow of trains through the area rather than cancel more. A 30-minute suspension took place from 13.00 while repairs were effected. A signal failure at North Acton brought the Central Line to a stand from 06.55 for 25 minutes, the fault self-clearing. Three trains were stalled between stations, two for 15 minutes and one for 20 minutes.



Left: The LU Station Operations Room at Charing Cross looked festive on **Thursday 10 December**.

Photo: Brian Hardy

The day may be summarised thus:

- On the Victoria Line, a temporary 17kph speed restriction imposed over the crossover at Walthamstow Central throughout the day because of a cracked rail. Even an increase to speed limit to 33 kph at 11.30 did little to alleviate the blocking back approaching Walthamstow and therefore several trains were cancelled.

- 40-minute late start to the Piccadilly Line between Rayners Lane and South Harrow because of a points defect at the latter.
- Lack of serviceable trains on the District Line reached 11 in the morning peak, but having recovered from that, a signal failure on the westbound at Earl's Court from 11.35 suspended the service west of South Kensington and the outer rail Circle Line. Services resumed at 12.25 – two trains were stalled between stations for the duration and 13 trains cancelled in consequence.
- Hampstead station closed 11.45 to 13.00 – cable fault and consequently lifts out of service.
- Metropolitan, Circle and Hammersmith & City lines all brought to a stand at 19.30, along with the Piccadilly Line west of South Harrow because of a communications equipment failure. Services resumed at 19.55.

Friday 11 December was uneventful until 13.25, when a person under a westbound District Line train at West Brompton suspended the service between Earl's Court and Wimbledon until 14.30. One westbound train was stalled on the approach to West Brompton throughout. Paddington (Suburban) station closed at 14.10 because a slippery floor surface was discovered in the ticket hall, causing some passengers to fall. Once the affected area was made safe, the station reopened at 19.50.

On **Saturday 12 December**, the District Line continued to have a number of cancellations because of defective stock, reaching eight as the day progressed. However, from 06.30, the need for a number of control room staff at Hammersmith being advised to self-isolate because of Covid-19, there were an additional 18 trains cancelled until the late shift because of a lack of control room staff. A signal failure on the eastbound approach to Arnos Grove at 23.55 caused an initial 25-minute delay.

A lack of Train Operators on the early shift on **Sunday 13 December** saw nine trains cancelled on the C&H until late afternoon. Points failing at Mornington Crescent at 06.25 suspended the Charing Cross branch of the Northern Line. However, because the City branch starts later on a Sunday, a special 'line-clear' was obtained and trains were thus diverted via that route after 15 minutes. The station staffing situation meant that only Angel and Elephant & Castle could be served until normal opening time. Services via Charing Cross resumed at 07.10. Two signals failing from 21.25 between Preston Road and Northwick Park on the northbound local line caused a number of Metropolitan Line trains to be diverted via the northbound fast line between Wembley Park and Harrow-on-the-Hill until clear at 23.10.

Hanger Lane station remained closed until 05.55 on **Monday 14 December**, because of an issue with the gates between the platform and ticket hall. Just before 13.00, a track fire at Gunnersbury suspended the District Line's Richmond branch with an eastbound District Line train stalled approaching the station. In the event, its passengers had to be detrained to the station via the track, which was completed at 14.05. Apart from the incident train, two other District Line trains were stalled on the line but were in stations. A cable fault was diagnosed and once replaced, services resumed at 21.20.

Tuesday 15 December was uneventful until 09.30 when a points failure on the northbound at Wembley Park suspended the Metropolitan Line south of Harrow-on-the-Hill. Being at the tail end of the peak, numerous trains were stalled on the northbound with priority given to moving them into platforms and detraining, then working them forward, all of which was to clear the City. Even so, five trains were stalled between stations, the last reaching the platform at Finchley Road at 11.10. In the meanwhile, services resumed from Wembley Park northwards from 10.50 but remained suspended south of there until 12.00, with northbound all-stations trains having to run via the fast line to Harrow through until the close of traffic. At 09.30 a person went trackside at Hounslow East, heading towards Osterley, suspending the service between Acton Town and Heathrow until 10.40. One westbound train was stalled off current until 10.30. Camden Town station closed at 23.10 because of a passenger assault at top level, remaining so until the close of traffic.

Wednesday 16 December is summarised as follows:

- Piccadilly Line suspended west of Rayners Lane 07.55 to 09.00 – signal failure at Ruislip Manor.
- Nine District Line cancellations in both peaks for defective stock.
- Two consecutive trains taken out of service eastbound at Elm Park from 10.00 – broken windows because of loose flying ballast.
- 25-minute delay on the Central Line at Bank from 16.10 – unattended item.
- Bank – Monument station complex closed 18.25 to 18.50 – fire alarm activated.

On **Thursday 17 December**, a SPAD by a northbound Bakerloo Line train at 08.55 at Queen's Park caused a 20-minute delay while the train was set back behind the signal. Hyde Park Corner station closed from 17.45 to 18.10 because of a person ill in the ticket hall. Two separate non-communicating Hammersmith & City Line trains caused delays later in the evening. The first was at Hammersmith at 21.25 causing a 25-minute delay, and then westbound at Euston Square at 22.55. This latter caused an initial 15-minute delay but an overall 45-minute delay while the train travelled in restricted manual to Edgware Road.

Friday 18 December was thus:

- Points failure at Aldgate North Junction from 07.25 to 07.50 with services suspended through the area.
- 20-minute delay at Queen's Park from 10.15 – SPAD by a southbound Bakerloo Line train approaching the station.
- Bakerloo Line suspended north of Queen's Park 11.30 to 12.05 – Network Rail signal failure at Willesden Junction.
- Seven Sisters LU station closed and trains non-stopped 18.30 to 19.25 – unattended item.
- Osterley station closed 21.20 to 22.10 – local power failure.
- Westbound Jubilee Line platform at Westminster non-stopped 23.05 until the end of traffic – platform edge door defect. The incident caused a 15-minute initial delay to the service.
- Last two southbound trains from the Barnet branch delayed for 25 minutes – passenger action on a terminating train at East Finchley which required police intervention.

Edgware Bakerloo Line station remained closed from the start of traffic on **Saturday 19 December** because of insufficient staff, opening for business at 06.00. A Network Rail signal failure at East Putney on the westbound caused an initial 25-minute initial delay from 13.40. A local power failure caused Colliers Wood station to close from 17.50 until 19.10. An altercation on the westbound platform at Leytonstone required the station's closure from 23.45 until the end of traffic. Lack of train staff resulted in a number of cancellations network-wide, the worst affected in the mid-evening being the C&H and Victoria lines (7 trains each) and the Piccadilly Line (12 trains).

The Victoria Line was unable to start up between Seven Sisters and Walthamstow Central until 06.45 on **Sunday 20 December** because of a late finish to overnight work on points at the latter. Holland Park station remained closed at the start of traffic because of insufficient staff, opening at 06.30. The day was otherwise uneventful.

Monday 21 December began with a signalling problem at West Kensington at 06.05, suspending the Ealing and Richmond services until 06.35. Three trains were cancelled for the failure but a further 12 for defective stock (ten in the evening peak). A multiple signal failure between Bank and Angel suspended the Northern Line's northbound City service from 18.40 to 19.30. A lack of Train Operators resulted in ten trains being cancelled on the Victoria Line for the evening peak.

A fire alarm activation and subsequent loss of power to Hammersmith Signalling Control Centre at 04.00 on **Tuesday 22 December** meant no service at all on the District, Hammersmith & City, Circle and Metropolitan lines from the start of traffic, with all trains remaining in depots and sidings. The Piccadilly Line was also suspended west of South Harrow because of the Met's Uxbridge branch also being affected. With no District Line service, a selected number of Piccadilly Line trains called at all stations between Acton Town and Hammersmith. Two engineers' trains had to be diverted to Northfields Depot to stable as they could not reach Ruislip Depot. It took until lunch time for the problems to be fully resolved with service recovery on some lines taking until the evening 'peak' (such as it was under the circumstances). Services began/resumed as follows:

06.50	District Line	Throughout except for High Street Kensington – Edgware Road.
06.50	Chiltern Railways	Throughout via the Metropolitan Line.
07.00	Piccadilly Line	South Harrow – Uxbridge.
07.15	Metropolitan Line	North of Wembley Park to all destinations.
08.50	Hammersmith & City Line	Barking – King's Cross.
09.45	Metropolitan Line	Wembley Park – Aldgate.
10.55	Hammersmith & City Line	King's Cross – Baker Street
12.25	Hammersmith & City Line	Baker Street – Hammersmith.
12.25	Circle Line	Throughout.
12.30	District Line	High Street Kensington – Edgware Road.

A person under a westbound Central Line train at Debden at 15.40 suspended the service east of Woodford. However, the operation of section switches enabled a service to reach Loughton from 16.20. Services resumed at 17.00. Westbound Jubilee Line trains non-stopped Westminster from 18.55 to 19.35 because of problems with CCTV displaying in train cabs. A ruptured gas pipe at Northwood at 18.50 caused services to be suspended between Harrow-on-the-Hill and Watford, Amersham and Chesham until 21.30, with the station remaining closed until 21.55. The service never did recover with delays and 13 trains cancelled until the end of traffic. A lack of control room staff at Baker Street because of Covid-19 saw the Bakerloo Line suspended in its entirety from 21.30 until the end of traffic.

A lack of control room staff for the Bakerloo Line at Baker Street meant that the service was unable to start up until 07.30 on **Wednesday 23 December** and closed down again by 22.00 later in the day. Even so, there were a constant 12 trains cancelled throughout the line's reduced operating hours, which was almost half the service. The rest of the day was as follows:

- Wood Green and Holland Park stations remained closed because of insufficient staff, until 05.55 and 06.30 respectively.
- Defective S7 Stock on the District Line caused 12 cancellations in the morning peak.
- Intermittent points failure at Brixton. Victoria Line suspended south of Victoria 14.40 to 15.10 and 17.10 to 17.25. A reduced end-to-end service of 22 trains was implemented with only one platform available for reversing at Brixton until the end of traffic.
- Piccadilly Line suspended Green Park – Hammersmith 17.10 to 18.00 – person under a westbound train at Knightsbridge.
- Metropolitan Line suspended Harrow-on-the-Hill – Watford 18.40 to 20.10 – person under a northbound train at Northwood.

As on the previous day, the Bakerloo Line started up later from 07.30 and closed down early by 22.00 on **Thursday 24 December** because of a lack of control room staff at Baker Street, with trains cancelled throughout its operational hours varying between 13 and 15 – a split service (Harrow – Queen's Park (Kilburn High Road) and Queen's Park – Elephant & Castle) was operated. There were two late starts to services because of late finishes to overnight engineering work. First up was the Piccadilly Line's Heathrow branch by 40 minutes because of the traction current arrangements connected with the Christmas possession at Acton Town, which also affected the District Line between Earl's Court and Richmond. The second late start was the Northern Line's Barnet branch, where an overnight working group had failed to report back at the start of traffic. Once a track search had been undertaken, the Barnet branch began at 06.00. A fire alarm activation necessitated the Bank-Monument station complex to close from 08.55 for an hour. Eastbound C&H trains non-stopped Royal Oak from 21.40 because of a local power failure, closing completely from 22.45 until the end of traffic.

Although no passenger services were running on Christmas Day on **Friday 25 December** (for the 41st consecutive year), there were plenty of engineers' trains running between Ruislip Depot and Acton Town for the holiday period engineering work.

Boxing Day **Saturday 26 December** mostly involved station closures. Oxford Circus station remained closed at the start of traffic because of offensive graffiti on the northbound Victoria and Bakerloo Line platforms, opening at 08.50 apart from the Bakerloo which opened at 10.45. Although the offensive graffiti was removed, the rest of it remained for all to see. To provide staff assistance at Oxford Circus, Regent's Park station remained closed until 09.30. Other stations which closed during the day, mostly because of insufficient staff, were Queensway (start until 08.15), Southwark (start until 11.30), Temple (start until 15.00 and from 22.45 until close), Chancery Lane (start until 16.00) and Great Portland Street (22.35 until close of traffic). A lack of control room staff saw the Bakerloo Line service cease by 18.00.

Sunday 27 December is summarised thus:

- No Bakerloo Line service before 10.00 or after 18.00 – lack of control room staff. Around half the service was also cancelled again throughout the day because of insufficient Train Operators and in consequence there was no LU service north of Queen's Park.
- Services suspended through Whitechapel from 06.10 to 07.10 – points failure.
- 30-minute delay at Finsbury Park westbound Piccadilly Line from 07.20 – passenger action.
- A westbound Hammersmith & City Line train was unable to communicate with the new signalling on arrival at Euston Square at 09.50. Services were suspended through the area until 11.00. The train eventually moved off in restricted manual but having arrived at Baker Street at 10.30, left a signalling problem to the rear in its wake. Once it reached Edgware Road at 10.50, it was changed over with a District Line train which continued empty to Paddington, where it was able to resume normal running under legacy signalling.
- Goodge Street and Temple stations closed from 14.30 – insufficient staff. Temple reopened at 23.05 and Goodge Street stayed closed until the end of traffic.
- 35-minute delay westbound Central Line at Bank from 21.05 – passenger action.
- Tufnell Park station closed from 23.05 – insufficient staff.

The Bakerloo Line remained suspended until 07.30 on **Monday 28 December** because of control room staff shortage. Stations closed included Tufnell Park (throughout the day), Chancery Lane (start to 07.15), Temple (start to 07.00), Westminster (start to 05.45), Goodge Street (start until 15.00) and Mansion House (22.30 to the end of traffic). Westbound District Line trains non-stopped Gloucester Road from 15.55 until the end of traffic because of a leak of sewage,

Tufnell Park station remained closed throughout **Tuesday 29 December**. Other station closures included Redbridge (start until 05.55), Goodge Street (start until 14.40) and Mansion House (start to 07.00 and 22.25 until the end of traffic). A southbound Metropolitan Line train was unable to communicate with the new signalling system at Finchley Road at 14.15 with services being suspended south of Wembley Park until 15.05. One southbound train was stalled approaching Finchley Road for the duration. Two signals failing on the southbound at Oxford Circus from 18.55 resulted in delays for the Bakerloo Line until late evening, with seven trains cancelled in consequence. Points failing at Walthamstow Central suspended the Victoria Line north of Seven Sisters from 22.55. Once the two trains had reached the terminus, the last at 23.15, the service remained suspended until 00.50, in time for the last train.

On **Wednesday 30 December**, Tufnell Park station again remained closed throughout the day because of staffing issues, along with Mansion House (start to 06.55 and 22.30 until the end of traffic) and Goodge Street (start to 15.10 and after 22.35). At 08.50 a Bakerloo Line train exiting the siding at Harrow & Wealdstone stalled, causing an initial 20-minute delay while it was set back into the siding. A reduced service operated north of Stonebridge Park until 12.00, by which time the train had been moved to depot. The service was suspended north of Stonebridge Park from 14.35 until 15.25 while Network Rail repaired a current rail in the siding at Harrow.

Although station closures dominated the earlier and later parts of **Thursday 31 December** (q.v.), it began with the continued suspension of the District and Piccadilly lines through Acton Town because the work on the track and points replacement was overrunning – the west siding still had no track and the pointwork leading to it was incomplete. Services began at 07.15 between Turnham Green and Ealing Broadway and Hammersmith – Heathrow, with Acton Town – Rayners Lane following at 08.30 (there was no scheduled Piccadilly Line service to Uxbridge anyway). It took until mid-afternoon for the service to recover and at one time there were 15 District Line and 33 Piccadilly Line trains cancelled.

Station closures were:

Chalk Farm – start to 06.40.

Mansion House – start to 07.00 and 22.30 to

Goodge Street – start to 15.00 and 21.30 to close. close.

Tufnell Park – closed throughout the day.

Stepney Green – start to 06.30.

Other events of the day included:

- 45-minute delay to the northbound Metropolitan Line from Baker Street at 05.30 because of a non-communicating train. It took 45 minutes to reach Finchley Road in restricted manual, from where it continued normally under legacy signalling.
- A non-communicating eastbound District Line train at Paddington at 08.05 suspended both lines between High Street Kensington and Edgware Road, the offending train reaching the latter in restricted manual at 08.55. Services from Hammersmith C&H were also delayed, with one train being stalled east of Paddington until 08.35.
- It is thought that only Charing Cross station closed as planned as a result of New Year's Eve. However, there being no all-night service and passenger numbers being much lower (*but there's always some that don't heed government advice*), passenger services ended as summarised on pages 135-136 of this issue. Trains that were scheduled to run all night were stabled under local arrangements, although some continued running for staff movement purposes until 02.00.

There being no all-night service, the start-up of services will be reviewed in the next issue.

At the end of the year, the latest estimates were that the Waterloo & City Line would remain closed until at least April and Heathrow Terminal 4 until the end of the year – time will tell ...