

THE UNDERGROUND (DIARY) AND THE CORONAVIRUS

MARCH 2021 (Continued)



The result of the first stage of the 'road map' limited easing of Covid restrictions on 29 March 2021 was variable, in that some sections of the Underground were busier, as seen on a Central Line train (Left) and at Bond Street station (Above, Right), but at Baker Street (Right) at 17.05 on 2 April 2021 it was a different story. It will be interesting to see what the effect on

ridership will be when the next stage of lifting restrictions takes effect from 12 April. It is pleasing to see that the passengers inside the train are mask compliant!

Photos: Chris Wakeman (Right) and Hugh Bernard-Harte (Above and Above, Right)



APRIL 2021

The new month began on **Thursday 1 April** with two stations continuing on restricted opening hours as hitherto (Chancery Lane and South Wimbledon), with Tufnell Park also remaining closed until 06.55. Signals failing on the westbound at Holloway Road from 06.50 set the Piccadilly Line into various modes of delay, with 14 trains cancelled in consequence for the morning peak. At 08.25, LU points failing at Queen's Park disrupted the Bakerloo Line for the rest of the day. The initial incident caused extensive blocking back of trains and at 09.05 the service was suspended through the area while technical staff went trackside. Although services resumed at 09.25 with the problem unresolved, a special service was implemented with 17 trains cancelled most of the day. An eastbound engineer's train was unable to communicate with the new signalling system at 11.30 at the boundary point at Monument, suspending the District Line between Earl's Court and Whitechapel and the inner rail Circle Line until 12.40. The Circle and Hammersmith & City lines ended early by 22.00 because of a shortage of control room staff.



Above: *Two views of the errant engineer's train (q.v.) in Upminster Depot on Sunday 11 April 2021.*

Both photos: *DStock7080*

On **Good Friday 2 April**, the operation of Chancery Lane and South Wimbledon stations continued unchanged. At 11.35 a signal failure at Upminster suspended the District Line east of Dagenham East until 12.15 with one train stalled on the approach to Upminster until 12.00. The failure reoccurred at 15.40 resulting in another suspension until 16.35. Westbound Jubilee Line trains non-stopped Southwark from 19.00 to 20.30 because of a problem with the platform edge doors. On the C&H pair of lines, a lack of Train Operators saw no Circle Line service at all and just ten trains running between Hammersmith and Barking, but only until 17.30 when services were suspended because of insufficient control room staff.

Chancery Lane station remained closed all day on **Saturday 3 April** with South Wimbledon open between 07.00 and 22.30. Temple station closed between 09.30 and 14.00. Trains cancelled for no Train Operators reached 22 on the Central Line, 22 on the C&H (with no Circle Line service all day) and 14 on the Victoria Line. Other lines fared a lot better with only single-figure cancellations. On the operational railway, Marble Arch station closed from 16.15 to 16.55 because of escalator defects. A person trackside at Northwood Hills at 19.40 suspended the Metropolitan Line north of Harrow-on-the-Hill until 20.15 with one northbound train stalled approaching Northwood Hills until 20.10. Central Line services were suspended between Woodford and Epping from 21.25 to 22.30 because of yet another trespass incident – nobody was found after a search. A person sitting precariously on a wall near Barons Court suspended the District Line to Ealing and Richmond from 21.45 to 22.25. One westbound District Line train was stalled west of Barons Court with current off for the duration.

On **Sunday 4 April**, Chancery Lane station was closed before 07.25 and after 18.45, while South Wimbledon reverted to being open throughout the traffic day. The Hammersmith & City Line operated a reduced special service, while the Circle Line had only two trains running on the inner rail only but only until 20.30. A high level of (maximum) cancellations on other lines included the Central Line (17 trains), District (13) and Victoria (11). The District Line had a 30-minute late start at the east end of the line because of incomplete work on points at Upminster. Points failing at Green Park Junction suspended the Jubilee Line between Finchley Road and Waterloo from 19.05, the area of suspension being extended to London Bridge from 19.45. Through services resumed at 20.10. The Central Line was suspended east of Leytonstone from 21.20 following a report of persons trackside east of the station. After an extensive track search, nobody was found and services resumed at 22.35. Two eastbound trains were stalled, one approaching Leytonstone until 22.20 and another approaching Bethnal Green until 22.30.

Bank Holiday **Monday 5 April** offered the following:

- Chancery Lane station remained closed until 06.55, while Temple closed from 19.45.
- There was no Circle Line service throughout the day and the Hammersmith & City Line operated 10 trains between Hammersmith and Barking, but only until 17.00, when services were withdrawn because of a lack of control room staff.
- The Piccadilly Line's Rayners Lane service was suspended from 07.25 to 08.35 because of tree debris run over by a westbound train at South Harrow. Passengers were on the incident train throughout, which was stalled on the station's approach.
- A person observed walking east from Green Park brought the Piccadilly Line to a stand at 10.15 with the service initially suspended between Hammersmith and King's Cross. There were conflicting reports of whether there were one or two people involved, with one of them later being observed at Russell Square at 10.45. This required current off as far as Holloway Road which suspended the Piccadilly Line completely east of Hammersmith, and also the Northern Line service between Camden Town and Euston (City), as the King's Cross loop, where trains were reversing because of weekend engineering work, has traction current fed from the eastbound Piccadilly Line. In the end, one person was apprehended at King's Cross with services (on both lines) resuming at 11.45. During the time that current was off, Northern Line trains intended for Euston (City) were diverted to reverse at Mornington Crescent. A total of 21 Piccadilly Line trains (out of the reduced total of 41 for weekend engineering work) were cancelled, with services not getting back to until late in the evening.
- The Northern Line was operating a shuttle between Morden and Stockwell because of weekend engineering work, but was suspended from 12.10 to 13.45 because of a person under a southbound train at South Wimbledon.

Tuesday 6 April was the first day for a long time where no station was closed for a lack of staff. Moreover, all lines recorded single figures for Train Operator cancellations. All was quiet until 14.40 when a track fire at Willesden Junction suspended the Bakerloo Line north of Queen's Park until 15.50. The cause of the problem was a Train Protection Warning System (TPWS) grid catching fire. A person under a westbound Piccadilly Line train at Gloucester Road suspended the service between Arnos Grove and Hammersmith from 14.45. One train was stalled approaching South Kensington, which was authorised to return to Knightsbridge, arriving at 15.25. A limited service resumed between Arnos Grove and Hyde Park Corner at 16.10 with through services at 17.15. 32 trains were cancelled for the peak.

Most lines were in single figures for Train Operator cancellations on **Wednesday 7 April**, with the Central and Northern lines having 'a clean sheet' – there were also no staff-related station closures reported. The District Line had a 35-minute late start at the east end of the line because of repairs to a track defect west of Dagenham East. A failure of the southbound starting signal at West Harrow from the start of traffic initially caused delays for the Metropolitan Line, with the Piccadilly Line suspended west of Rayners Lane to ease train working. The Metropolitan Line was then suspended on the Uxbridge branch from 07.35 to 08.40 for investigative work and then again from 10.50 to 12.00 for repairs to be undertaken – 12 trains were cancelled in consequence. The Piccadilly Line resumed to Uxbridge at 12.15. The Piccadilly Line also had signal problems at Hammersmith from 06.10 with a suspension through the area from 07.35 to 08.00 – 21 trains were cancelled. Initially, the trains on the eastbound fast were routed through the centre siding but subsequent trains were routed via the eastbound local (District) line. Both lines' cancellations were for the failures and not for staffing issues. The respite from staff-related station closures was short-lived, because on **Thursday 8 April** the following stations were unable to operate full hours: Temple was closed before 07.25 and after 22.15 and Tufnell Park was closed before 07.00. There were two separate delays on the Northern Line between Waterloo and Kennington on the southbound for the investigation of water ingress, from 14.20 to 14.40 and again from 15.15 to 15.35. Cancellations for no Train Operators were again in single figures with the Northern Line again having a clear board.

On **Friday 9 April**, Temple station was open only from 07.10 to 18.20 while the only line with significant Train Operator cancellations was the Jubilee with 12 on the late shift. A person under a northbound train at Archway suspended the Northern Line between Camden Town and Finchley Central from 17.45 until 19.00. Archway station remained closed until 19.35 – 19 trains were cancelled in consequence. Network Rail points failing at Richmond at 23.20 suspended the Richmond branch of the District Line from 23.20 until 00.45. One stalled westbound train returned to Kew Gardens, arriving at 00.25.

On **Saturday 10 April**, the Circle Line had two trains on the inner rail and one on the outer with the main emphasis being Hammersmith – Barking. Temple was the only closure for staff shortage, opening for business at 07.15. A signal failure at Amersham at 10.20 suspended the Metropolitan Line north of Chalfont & Latimer until 12.20. A public disturbance close to London Bridge station caused the LU station to close from 23.40 until 00.20.



Left: Poster seen at Ealing Broadway on 11 April 2021 which says it all.

Photo: Colin Smith

Temple station remained closed until 15.00 on **Sunday 11 April**. The C&H and Victoria lines continued with their weekend reduced services. Unlike Saturday, when the Bakerloo Line had sufficient train staff, Sunday was a different ball game, with half the service cancelled and a split service operating, with just two trains shuttling between Harrow & Wealdstone and Queen's Park, the remainder on the core section. A fire alarm activation at Brixton caused the station to close from 19.10 to 19.45, with Victoria Line trains running empty between there and Stockwell in both directions. The Barnet branch of the Northern Line (including the Mill Hill shuttle) was suspended from 22.20 when a southbound train ran over an obstruction approaching Finchley Central causing it to stall with no movement. The train was propelled to Highgate Depot at 23.15 and subsequent track search found a damaged car tyre. Services resumed at 23.50. A report of a suspected person under a Central Line train at Mile End at 23.50 delayed the last two eastbound trains. No trace was found and the last two trains departed Mile End and Bethnal Green at 01.00.

Monday 12 April was the day of the next stage of the easing of Coronavirus restrictions, but with more to follow over the coming weeks. The Train Operator cancellations on all lines were maintained in single figures. Station closures for lack of staff were Covent Garden (opened at 06.15) and Tufnell Park (closed after 22.00). The easing of restrictions saw a reported increase of 15% of Underground travellers to 34% of normal figures, much of that being attributed to traffic at central London 'shopping' stations. Station closures for other reasons included Holland Park (until 08.15) because of a fault with station public address equipment, Canada Water eastbound (until 15.40) because of a defect with the platform edge doors and Baker Street (22.05 to 22.30) because of a fire alert. Operationally, the Jubilee Line was suspended east of North Greenwich from 09.50 because of points failing at the entry to Stratford Market Depot. Because of the number of trains on the eastbound approach to North Greenwich, progress on the extension in general was very slow. Services resumed at 11.15. Two trains were stalled – one approaching West Ham until 10.25 and one departing West Ham until 10.40. A track fire at the north end of platform 4 at Baker Street at 16.40 suspended the Metropolitan Line south of Wembley Park and bringing to a stand the Circle and Hammersmith & City lines because the number of mixed S7 and S8 trains in the City. Two southbound trains were stalled until 17.35 with services resuming at 17.40.

On **Tuesday 13 April**, there were no station closures for staff shortage and train cancellations for no Train Operators were in single figures on most lines with none at all on the Central, Northern and Jubilee lines. One of the lifts on the Northern Line side of Elephant & Castle station stalled in the shaft at 06.25, trapping those within until 07.05. The same lift stalled again at 15.40 with passengers again trapped inside until 16.30. There was one station closure for a fire alarm activation, being Victoria LU (closed 07.55 to 08.25). The District Line was suspended west of Parsons Green from 19.35 to 20.05 because of a track fire on the eastbound at Wimbledon Park.

King's Cross LU station closed from 11.55 to 12.35 on **Wednesday 14 April** because of a malicious operation of fire alarms. A person under a southbound Victoria Line train at Stockwell at 15.40 suspended the Victoria Line south of Victoria Line until 16.45. One southbound train was stalled between Vauxhall and Stockwell until 16.25. 18 trains were cancelled for the evening peak. Tufnell Park and Goodge Street stations closed early (at 22.00 and 22.30 respectively) because of insufficient staff.

Tufnell Park and Goodge Street stations were the only staff-related closures on **Thursday 15 April**, both opening for business at 06.50. Points failing south of Camden Town at 07.55 at the converging junction with the Edgware and Barnet routes, suspended the southbound Charing Cross branch of the Northern Line, with the incident train stalled until 08.15. What was reported as a trackside fire at Plaistow caused delays for the District Line and suspended the Hammersmith & City Line east of Moorgate until 10.30 – smoke from a nearby construction site was suggested as being the culprit. At

23.20, a person trackside was struck by a westbound train at North Acton Junction, suspending the Central Line west of White City, effectively until the close of traffic, with the last handful of westbound trains worked to their respective destinations.

Goodge Street station remained closed until 06.50 on **Friday 16 April**. Also from the start of traffic, a signal failure at South Kensington suspended the District and Circle lines through the area until 06.00 and 06.20 respectively. Marble Arch station closed from 07.35 to 08.10 because of an escalator defect – the other escalator was already out of service for long-term maintenance.

On **Saturday 17 April**, no stations were reported as being closed for insufficient staff, while the Victoria and C&H lines continued with their weekend reduced services. The Victoria Line had between 12 and 14 trains cancelled throughout the day (out of 33) while the C&H combined were able to run 10 trains out of the 31 scheduled with priority given to the Hammersmith & City Line and minimal (and often no) service on the Circle Line. Other lines also crept up into double figure cancellations with 11 on the Metropolitan Line and 10 on the Piccadilly. A defective London Overground train at Kew Gardens suspended the District Line's Richmond branch from 13.25 to 13.55. The Northern Line was suspended north of Golders Green from 21.15 until 21.55 because of a person ill on a northbound train at Brent Cross.

Train Operator cancellations on **Sunday 18 April** continued much as the previous day, although the C&H pair of lines operated the normal timetable until early evening, when a reduced special service was implemented until the end of traffic. Stations closed for insufficient staff were Temple (18.10 to 23.00), Chancery Lane (after 18.30) and Tufnell Park (after 22.00). There were no notable operational incidents throughout the day.

On **Monday 19 April**, a signal failure west of South Kensington on the District Line at 20.00 meant that the route for outer rail Circle Line trains could not be obtained. The incident train – a Circle Line! – was eventually diverted into the westbound District Line platform at Gloucester Road, following which the route cleared and the next (District Line) train routed into Circle Line platform 2. There the passengers and crews were changed over (a “stock and crew” as it's known in the trade) after a delay of 20 minutes. All lines were in low single figures for Train Operator cancellations, including the C&H, which recorded two – a vast improvement indeed. Station closures for staffing issues were Chancery Lane before 06.55, Tufnell Park before 07.00 and Tower Hill closing from 18.55 to 20.45.

Tuesday 20 April was uneventful until 10.15, when points failing at Hammersmith suspended the Circle and Hammersmith & City lines west of Edgware Road. One westbound train was stalled approaching Hammersmith until 10.55. From 11.30 a limited service resumed between Edgware Road and Royal Oak, using the new crossover between there and Paddington¹ with through services at 13.00. At 11.10, a signal that returned to danger between West Ham and Plaistow front-tripped an eastbound train, bringing services to a stand until 11.40 while the incident train was set back behind the signal. Passenger action on a southbound Metropolitan Line train departing Wembley Park caused services to be suspended south of Wembley Park from 16.05 until 16.50. Two trains were stalled between stations for the duration. Station closures for staffing issues were Marble Arch (before 06.15) and Chancery Lane (after 22.30).

Station closures for lack of staff on **Wednesday 21 April** were Regent's Park (before 06.15) and Chancery Lane (before 07.00 and after 22.20). Goodge Street station also remained closed because of defective station safety equipment, opening late at 06.35 but closed again from 07.30 to 10.30. A signal failure on the northbound at Paddington from the start of traffic soon set the Bakerloo Line into various modes of 'delay' until fixed at 07.10 – seven trains were cancelled in consequence. A person ill on a southbound train at Clapham South at 15.05 caused the station to close because staff travelled with the passenger to Morden, where help was at hand. Clapham South station reopened at 15.45. A track fire at East Ham suspended the District and Hammersmith & City lines through the area from 18.35 until 19.15.

The only station closure noted on **Thursday 22 April** was Chancery Lane, before 07.00. The Jubilee Line was brought to a stand at 08.10 because of a signalling problem between Green Park and Westminster on the eastbound, causing an initial 25-minute delay. A further 15-minute delay occurred on the westbound at Bermondsey at 08.20 because of a defective train.

¹ The new signalling allows trains to reverse in either direction via the new crossover by shunting forward (from Paddington or Royal Oak) but also by running to the next station and returning in the wrong direction across the crossover.

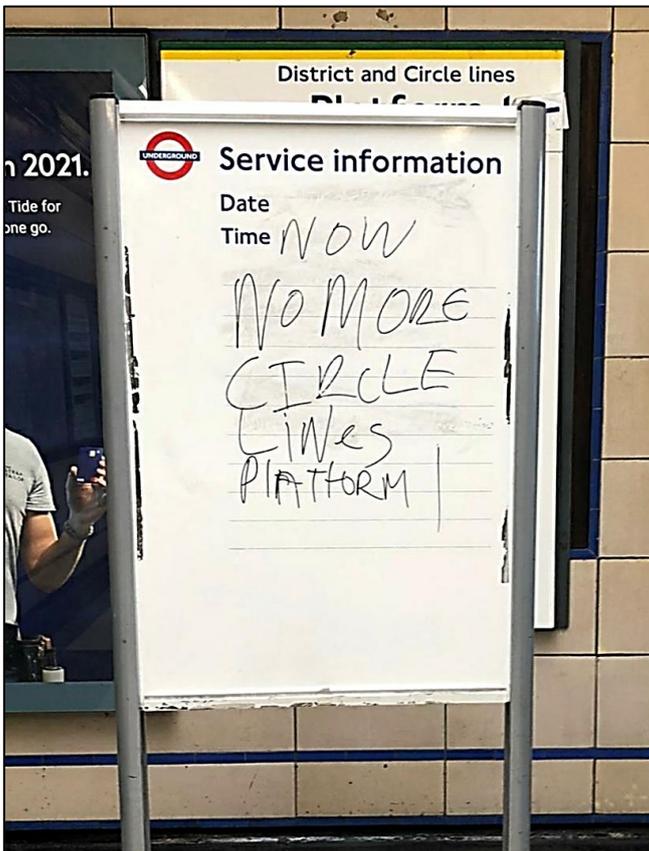
Friday 23 April was thus:

- Heathrow Terminal 5 closed and Piccadilly Line suspended west of Terminals 2,3 from the start of traffic until 05.55 – fire alarm activation.
- Points failure at Woodford Junction from 06.00 suspended the Central Line between Leytonstone and Epping until 07.10 and the Hainault – Woodford shuttle from 07.00 to 07.45. Normal signalling was restored at 09.10.
- Jubilee Line suspended north of Wembley Park 12.00 to 12.35 – track fire at Kingsbury.
- Bakerloo Line suspended north of Queen's Park 13.10 to 14.10 – track fire just south of Harrow & Wealdstone.
- Tufnell Park station closed 14.00 to 23.00 – insufficient staff.
- 25-minute delay Mansion House westbound from 15.15 while a piece of ducting protruding onto the track was removed.
- Train Operator cancellations reached double figures on the late shift on the Metropolitan Line (10 trains) and Central Line (14).

Saturday 24 April began with Canary Wharf station remaining closed until 06.40 because of a fault with the station's fire alarm system. The Bakerloo Line was suspended north of Queen's Park from 05.45 to 06.40 because a Network Rail points failure at Stonebridge Park. One northbound train was stalled approaching Stonebridge Park until 06.15. A report of two persons accessing the track at Wood Green at 12.05 suspended the Piccadilly Line east of King's Cross. To cut a long story short, two people were arrested and services resumed at 13.35 with 31 trains cancelled. At 17.25 an eastbound Hammersmith & City Line train accepted a wrong signal at Barking and ended up at Upney instead of proceeding to the sidings to reverse. The plan was for the train to be piloted back into the sidings from Upney but a signal failure prevented this and therefore the train was extended east (with a pilotman) to the bay platform at Dagenham East. The District and Hammersmith & City services were suspended east of Plaistow in consequence until 18.30. Three trains were stalled between stations, one for 30 minutes, the other two for 45 minutes. Later in the evening, a lack of control room staff at Hammersmith caused the Circle Line to close by 19.45 and the Hammersmith & City Line at 21.00. Stations closed because of staff shortage were Tufnell Park (14.15 to 22.55) and Bermondsey (22.50 to 23.35). Train Operator cancellations on the Victoria Line were 14 for most of the day and 13 on the Central Line on the late shift. It is noted elsewhere (see page 395) that CBTC signalling replaced legacy signalling between Monument and Sloane Square on the District and Circle lines. Trains began running (empty) over the new section from 08.30, with passengers being carried from 13.15. However, this was a 'soft' opening as the TfL service status showed as being no service between the two points for the rest of the weekend.

Sunday 25 April was uneventful until 10.00, when a points failure at King's Cross suspended the northbound Northern Line service via the City, with an empty southbound train being reversed south to north held in the King's Cross loop. With no resolution to the problem, the points were secured and the Train Operator escorted out of the loop, the train remaining there for the rest of the day. Services on the northbound City branch resumed at 11.25. A repeat Network Rail points failure at Stonebridge Park at 11.35 suspended the Bakerloo Line north of Queen's Park until 13.10. In the meantime, points failing at Wembley Park from 12.10 disrupted both the Metropolitan and Jubilee lines. The Jubilee Line (which had 22 trains cancelled in consequence) was suspended north of Willesden Green. The Metropolitan Line was suspended south of Harrow-on-the-Hill from 12.35 (having already had a 20-minute delay previously because of a SPAD, also at Wembley Park) until 13.20. The Jubilee Line resumed at 13.45 but both lines were suspended again from 14.10 until 15.10 because of a repeat failure. A further suspension on both lines took place from 17.15 until 18.00 (Jubilee Line) and 18.45 (Metropolitan Line). Train Operator cancellations were much the same as the previous day but no stations were closed.

On **Monday 26 April**, the only blot on the landscape was a signal failure on the southbound Northern Line at Embankment from 20.45, with the service suspended from 22.05 until 23.00. All lines' Train operator cancellations were in low single figures with no station closures noted.



Left: With the District and Circle lines suspended because of a signal failure at Praed Street Junction (see below) on Tuesday, this gem of a whiteboard was spotted at High Street Kensington. At least it's being used for what it was intended for, but as for presentation skills, 0/10. Every journey matters ...

Photo: Hugh Bernard-Harte

A smell of gas on the station at Bond Street caused the station to close from 09.35 to 12.00 on **Tuesday 27 April**. Points failing at Praed Street Junction west of Edgware Road suspended the Circle Line in its entirety, the District Line east of High Street Kensington and the Hammersmith & City Line between Paddington (Suburban) and Euston Square – the last taking advantage of the new moves associated with CBTC signalling. The Metropolitan Line was also suspended into the City. Services resumed at 17.00, only to be suspended again from 19.05 with a repeat failure. The decision was taken to secure the points until the end of traffic, so there remained no District Line to Edgware Road, nor any outer rail Circle Line service until the end of traffic. Other services resumed at 20.30 with severe delays until the end of traffic.

Points failing at Barking at 21.25 caused the Hammersmith & City Line to be suspended east of Moorgate because trains couldn't access Barking Sidings to reverse. After an initial delay of 25 minutes and the movement of four stalled trains, the District Line resumed but the H&C remained suspended until 23.10. A Network Rail signal failure at Gunnersbury at 23.35 suspended the District Line's Richmond branch until 00.45, which was just in time for the last trains to run to Richmond.

As this issue closed for press, Heathrow Terminal 4 station continues to remain closed at the request of the Airports Authority until at least early-2022, while the Waterloo & City Line is expected to reopen in rush hours only from 21 June. And as for Night Tube – “certainly not before 2022” we are told.

To be continued in the next issue ...