

UNDERGROUND DIARY

NOVEMBER 2024 (Continued)

On **Tuesday 26 November** the District and Piccadilly lines were suspended through Ealing Common from 05.35 to 06.35 because of a points failure. One train was stalled approaching Ealing Common until 06.25. The Metropolitan Line was suspended between Harrow-on-the-Hill and Watford from 06.55 to 10.45 because of a smell of gas in Rickmansworth signal cabin. Amersham and Chesham trains were able to operate via the main lines as the Watford South Junction and Rickmansworth areas were able to operate in automatic mode. Stations closed for a lack of staff were Mansion House (06.50 to 09.45) and Holland Park (before 07.25).

Wednesday 27 November was thus:

- The Hammersmith & City and Circle lines were 30 minutes late starting up because of traction current issues between east of Paddington and Baker Street.
- Northbound Northern Line trains non-stopped Woodside Park all day because of defective safety equipment.
- District and Circle lines suspended through High Street Kensington from 06.30 – track fire. District and inner rail Circle lines resumed at 08.25 and outer rail Circle Line at 09.05. A further 25-minute delay occurred from 10.50 for track checks.
- Bakerloo Line suspended south of Queen's Park 08.20 to 09.15 – track fire northbound between Edgware Road and Paddington.
- No Piccadilly Line service west of Rayners Lane from 09.40 for the rest of the day – poor railhead conditions. (Subsequently ongoing ...)¹.
- District Line suspended east of Barking and Hammersmith & City Line east of Moorgate from 16.00 – traction current problems at Upminster. The District Line resumed at 16.45 but was suspended again east of Dagenham East from 18.30 to 19.35. The Hammersmith & City Line resumed at 18.35.
- District Line suspended Earl's Court – Ealing/Richmond 20.55 to 21.45. Empty train stalled entering Lillie Bridge Depot.
- Holland Park station closed from 21.35 – lack of staff.

There was no Piccadilly Line service west of Rayners Lane all day on **Thursday 28 November**, because of poor railhead conditions.

Right: Because of no Piccadilly Line service west of Rayners Lane, most Uxbridge-bound trains terminated at South Harrow and reversed via the sidings to pick up their next eastbound workings. One such train is seen reversing in the westbound platform and is to go to the third siding from the left, hence the number '3' displayed on the theatre-type route indicator above the shunt signal. When the new station at



South Harrow opened in 1935, a section at the east end of the old station remained disused, clearly seen in the photograph. The brick building on the left is the interlocking machine room (IMR) for the signalling.

Photo: TubeTroll

The morning peak on the Piccadilly Line was disrupted by a signal failure on the eastbound east of Russell Square from 07.40 with trains working through under failure conditions until clear an hour later. However, the service remained under par until after the evening peak. The Metropolitan Line was suspended between Northwood and Watford from 14.15 to 15.10 because of another smell of gas in Rickmansworth signal cabin. As before (q.v.) Amersham and Chesham trains were able to operate via the main lines as the Watford South Junction and Rickmansworth areas operated in automatic mode. The Bakerloo Line closed down early north of Queen's Park for emergency track repairs at Stonebridge Park with no service after 22.30. 13 trains shuttled between Elephant & Castle and Queen's Park until the end of traffic. Stations closed for a lack of staff were Tower Hill (before 06.00) and Holland Park (before 07.20 and after 21.45).

¹ The curtailment of the Piccadilly Line west of Rayners Lane was originally advertised by TfL as a service suspension, subsequently changed on 1 December to be a "part closure" and from 10 December with the addition of (because of) "difficult track conditions". The fact that up to half the service could be cancelled due to unavailable stock hasn't been mentioned and, for the most part, remained at 'minor delays' ... However, all that changed on 18 December with a revised announcement which included "due to a shortage of ... trains while we fix damage caused by leaf fall".

Friday 29 November was another day without a Piccadilly Line service to Uxbridge (q.v.). This was likely to remain so for some time and thus it will be noted when services resume. Stations closed for no staff were Holland Park (before 07.00) and Aldgate East (before 08.30). A southbound Northern Line train was unable to move off from Finchley Central at 14.15 with a no movement defect, suspending the Barnet branch until 14.45. Caledonian Road station closed from 23.10 to 00.15 because of lift defects, while into Night Tube, Dollis Hill station was closed from 02.15 to 03.20 for police investigations.

On **Saturday 30 November**, there were no significant incidents throughout the day to cause serious disruption. Station closures for a lack of staff were Hyde Park Corner (14.00 to 23.05) and Earl's Court (02.00 to 02.30).

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Sunday 1 December was similar to the previous day, with no notable events to catch the headlines. The only station closed for a lack of staff was Holland Park, which shut up shop at 22.20.

The Piccadilly Line continued not to operate west of Rayners Lane all day on **Monday 2 December** because continuing poor railhead conditions. The situation has also had an effect on the rest of the service with several trains cancelled throughout the day for defective stock. The Central Line had two separate signal failures which affected the service during the morning and into the afternoon, the first being at Holborn from 06.30, the second at North Acton. Stations closed for a lack of staff were Lancaster Gate (before 08.30) and Arsenal (18.50 to 20.55).

There were two instances of persons trackside on **Tuesday 3 December**. The first was at Clapham South (20-minute delay from 15.15) and then at Loughton (25-minute delay from 15.25). Chalk Farm station was closed from 08.50 to 09.15 while passengers were transferred from a lift stalled in the shaft, and Southfields station was closed from 16.25 to 18.00 because of a local power failure. Additionally, Covent Garden remained closed until 06.15 because of a lack of staff.

On **Wednesday 4 December**, a late finish to overnight rerailing at Dollis Hill prevented the Metropolitan and Jubilee lines from starting up south of Wembley Park until 05.45. Old Street station closed from 11.40 to 13.00 because of a person ill in the ticket hall, and the only station to close for a lack of staff was Fulham Broadway from 23.45 to 00.10. A body discovered on the track at Goldhawk Road at 23.50 suspended the Circle and Hammersmith & City lines between Paddington and Hammersmith effectively until the end of traffic, with the remaining trains detrained in platforms and departing empty when clear. However, one westbound train was stalled approaching Goldhawk Road, which reached the station at 02.05.

Eastbound District and Circle Line trains non-stopped Westminster from 05.55 to 06.20 and 06.45 to 08.25 on **Thursday 5 December** because of defective OPO equipment. Also at Westminster but on the Jubilee Line and after a 15-minute initial delay, westbound trains non-stopped from 13.00 to 14.15 because of a defect on a platform edge door. Operationally, the Metropolitan Line suffered from a 35-minute suspension on the Uxbridge branch from 05.20 to 05.55 because of a track circuit failure at Harrow-on-the-Hill, and a late (06.15) start on the Northern Line between Golders Green and Camden Town because of a late finish to overnight rerailing at Hampstead. A northbound Northern Line train arrived at Mill Hill East at 20.00 having struck a tree in the East Finchley area, whereupon it was found that the train had a damaged shoebeam and a number of traction shoes missing. The service to Mill Hill East was then suspended (until the close of traffic) and north of Archway to High Barnet from 20.35 until 21.55. The defective train at Mill Hill East was moved at the close of traffic to the north siding at Finchley Central.

With the north siding at Finchley Central occupied by the damaged train (q.v.), and being required for Finchley Central reversers, the train was moved to the south siding, which prevented services to Mill Hill East from starting up until 07.05 on **Friday 6 December**. Because of being declared an unsafe structure, Highgate Depot was declared "out of bounds ... until further notice" during the day. Those trains trapped in the depot were cleared with the edict then being issued "nothing is going in there for the foreseeable future". This meant finding alternative stabling accommodation for 16 trains. In short, other stabling locations were used, including the platforms at High Barnet (where there are three non-commissioned sidings from the erstwhile late-1990s upgrade plan!) and the middle two platforms at East Finchley. All trains were cleared from Highgate during that afternoon and evening, leaving Highgate Depot empty to await its fate... Stations closed for a lack of staff were Russell Square (before 07.20) and Southwark (after 22.30 and through Night Tube). During the day, points failing at Cockfosters caused a 25-minute delay from 11.05, with platform 4 taken out of use until the start of traffic on Monday. Approaching the beginning of Night Tube at 00.50, a person being pursued trackside by the police suspended the Jubilee Line between Waterloo and Wembley Park until 02.05. The penultimate northbound Metropolitan Line train to Wembley Park was stalled at Finchley Road for the duration and the last train held at Baker Street. Earlier in the evening, at 22.15, a track circuit failure on the eastbound approach to Hounslow West proved elusive to trace, with services suspended west of Heathrow T2&3 in consequence and severe delays west of Northfields, culminating in a suspension.

Saturday 7 December was thus:

- Piccadilly Line suspended west of Northfields until 05.55 – track circuit failure at Hounslow West (q.v.).
- Northern Line suspended south of Kennington 13.35 until 15.40 and then again from 17.50 to 19.25, points failure at Stockwell.
- Eastbound District Line trains non-stopped West Brompton 16.45 to 20.00 – loss of platform lighting.
- Northbound Bakerloo and London Overground trains non-stopped North Wembley from 19.20 to 20.25 – fallen tree.
- Bakerloo Line suspended north of Stonebridge Park 21.00 to 22.25 – obstruction on track at Harrow & Wealdstone.
- Stations closed for a lack of staff were Southwark (through Night Tube until 07.15) and Clapham South (15.15 to 15.55).

During Night Tube early on **Sunday 8 December**, a track circuit failure at Barons Court suspended the Piccadilly Line between Hyde Park Corner and Acton Town from 04.30. Points were secured to enable trains to resume under failure conditions with a further suspension from 08.10 to 08.50, the latter also including the District Line between Earl's Court and Ealing/Richmond. A fallen tree obstructing the southbound approach to Watford North Junction suspended the Metropolitan Line between Rickmansworth and Moor Park from the start of traffic, with services beginning at 08.00. Hammersmith (D&P) station closed from 12.05 to 12.35 because of an evacuation exercise, while Hyde Park Corner station closed from 14.10 to 15.15 because of a smell of smoke in the disused area of the station. The only station closed for a lack of staff was Goodge Street (06.30 to 15.00).

With Highgate Depot closed and 16 trains required for service from it, a very limited service started up the Barnet branch on **Monday 9 December**, as the only trains available were the eight from High Barnet Sidings and the five outstabled at High Barnet and East Finchley, until those north from Morden began filtering through, a situation expected to remain for some time. Similar arrangements would apply also in the southbound direction late at night. Moreover, the Piccadilly Line continued to suffer from many cancellations, with a high rate of trains out of service for wheel defects. During the day, it was noted that there was a very sparse service at times, especially to and from Rayners Lane. Goodge Street station remained closed until 07.30 because of a lack of staff.

The Piccadilly Line's rolling stock unavailability issues culminated in an Acton Town – Rayners Lane shuttle from **Tuesday 10 December**, to provide some sort of service on the branch. However, the desired four-train shuttle often turned out to be three or even two trains at times. The District Line's Edgware Road service was suspended to and from Earl's Court from the start of traffic because of signalling issues at High Street Kensington. Whilst the Circle Line was able to operate, the District Line service to Edgware Road began at 11.35. Goodge Street station closed at 21.55 until the end of traffic – no staff.

Other than-going problems on the Northern Line (Highgate Depot) and Piccadilly Line (lack of trains), there were no notable incidents on **Wednesday 11 December**. Stations closed for a lack of staff were Covent Garden (before 06.20) and Goodge Street (before 06.50).

On **Thursday 12 December**, an eastbound District Line train was unable to move off from West Kensington at 15.25, causing a 25-minute delay while it was worked empty into Lillie Bridge Depot.

Points failing in the Stratford area from 07.10 set the Jubilee Line into severe delays mode for much of the day because of the restrictive nature of the failure. A Network Rail points failure at Richmond at 18.50 suspended the District Line's Richmond branch until 21.00. The failure reoccurred at 21.35 with a 50% service in consequence for the rest of the day. Water ingress in the Central Line escalator shaft at Bank initially resulted in a one-way system with only one escalator available (*Right*), but from 16.10 the situation had worsened and Central Line trains then non-stopped Bank until the end of traffic.

Photo: Kim Rennie

A late finish to overnight work on points at Upminster meant a 35-minute late start for



westbound District Line trains on **Friday 13 December**. This was followed by a 25-minute delay on the northbound Victoria Line between Brixton and Victoria because of passenger action at Brixton and then subsequently Vauxhall. Bermondsey station remained closed until 07.00 and Southwark until 07.10, both because of a lack of staff.

The Piccadilly Line's woes with a shortage of trains continued throughout **Saturday 14 December**, with only 37 trains out of the scheduled 72 in service at 16.30 and two of the Rayners Lane shuttles instead of the desired four. A recurring points failure at Northfields from 09.50 suspended the Heathrow branch of the Piccadilly Line until 12.10 with all eastbound trains having to run via the eastbound local line. Two eastbound trains were stalled between stations until 10.30. A signal failure at Morden from 14.20 suspended the Northern Line south of Stockwell from 14.20 to 15.00. The line was then suspended north of Queen's Park from 16.50 to 17.20 because of a person ill on a northbound train at Stonebridge Park.

A track fire just west of White City suspended the Central Line west of Marble Arch from 09.40 to 10.30 on **Sunday 15 December**.

Later in the day, a loss of signal control at Buckhurst Hill suspended the Central Line between Woodford and Epping from 19.40 to 20.25. A limited number of trains were permitted to stable again at Highgate Depot at the end of service, after the depot buildings were declared out of bounds from 6 December (q.v.).



Above: (Right) A view of Highgate Depot looking north on 22 April 2010 with two trains stabled on the 'south' roads. Even then, the depot building was looking rather forlorn. The tracks in the foreground were provided as part of the 1935-40 New Works Programme but never used, not even when the depot roads were doubled up to take two trains per road in June 1996.

Photo: Brian Hardy

Stations closed on **Monday 16 December** were Bermondsey (before 07.15 and after 22.00 – lack of staff), Oval (16.35 to 17.45 – escalator defects) and Waterloo (22.50 to 23.30 – fire alert with the Waterloo & City Line suspended in consequence). On the Victoria Line, points failing at Walthamstow Central from 18.20 caused an initial 30-minute delay, but was then suspended north of Seven Sisters from 19.45 to 21.45 but with only one platform then available at Walthamstow for the rest of the day.

Tuesday 17 December was thus:

- Despite it being advertised Piccadilly Line service to Uxbridge (q.v. and see also footnote on page 112), the occasional Piccadilly Line trains did reach Uxbridge, with two observed mid-morning and one late in the evening ...
- A westbound Metropolitan Line train went non-communicating at Farringdon at 08.20. It was able to depart in restricted manual but failed again a further twice, departing King's Cross empty at 09.05, by then 40 minutes late.
- Person under an eastbound District Line train at Aldgate East at 13.55. District Line suspended Tower Hill – Barking Hammersmith & City Line suspended completely and a reduced Circle Line service. One eastbound H&C train was stalled on Aldgate North Curve until 14.55, with services resuming at 15.05.
- Person ill on a southbound Northern Line train at Clapham Common at 23.35. The following southbound trains were held in platforms until clear at 00.20.
- Report of persons trackside just north of Wembley Park at 23.40. Jubilee Line suspended north of Willesden Green and Metropolitan Line suspended south of Harrow-on-the-Hill, both lines until the end of traffic. Four trains were stalled between stations, three of them until 01.10, but a fourth, approaching Wembley Park southbound, went defective and its passengers had to be rescued by a following empty train, onto which the passengers were transferred and taken back to Kingsbury, arriving at 02.15.
- Station closures for a lack of staff were Neasden (before 05.45), Holland Park (after 22.05) and Queensway (after 22.50).
- Stations closed for fire alerts were Holborn (from 19.45. Piccadilly Line area reopened at 20.20 and Central Line at 21.15) and Paddington H&C (22.20 to 22.50).

On **Wednesday 18 December**, On Wednesday 18 December, the Piccadilly Line's Acton Town – Rayners Lane shuttle service was suspended from 06.30 to 07.35 because of a multiple track circuit failure, caused by a track obstruction which caused fuses to blow. Holland Park station remained closed until 07.20 for a lack of staff, while Heathrow Terminal 5 closed from 05.55 to 06.20 because a fire alarm test by the BAA.

Thursday 19 December kicked off with a southbound Victoria Line train with door closure problems at Finsbury Park which caused a 25-minute delay from 07.10. Services on the District Line's Ealing Broadway branch and the Piccadilly Line were suspended west of Hammersmith from 19.20, because of points failing at Acton Town. One stalled eastbound Piccadilly Line train was authorised to return to South Ealing by 20.00. Once clear, the service remained suspended because of points failing at Northfields from 20.00, eventually resuming at 22.20. Marble Arch station closed from 23.15 to 00.05 because of passenger action and also Lancaster Gate from 23.20 until the end of traffic for its staff to assist at Marble Arch.

The only station closed on **Friday 20 December** for a lack of staff was Lancaster Gate, before 07.50 and 13.35 to 17.15, whilst Chancery Lane closed from 23.00 to 23.45 while staff assisted with a defective train. A signal failure at Heathrow Terminal 5 from 07.35 suspended the Piccadilly Line west of Heathrow T2&3 until 09.25. The Piccadilly Line remained under par for the rest of the day because of continuing cancellations for defective stock and no service west of Rayners Lane.

Colindale station reopened just before 13.00 following reconstruction work since June 2023. The Jubilee Line extension was brought to a stand from 17.55 to 18.20 because of signalling problems at Canary Wharf.

Saturday 21 December continued in the usual vein on the Piccadilly Line with rolling stock defects, many cancelled trains and no service west of Rayners Lane (although the odd Uxbridge trains appears to creep through according to "intertube" on the internet). Harrow-on-the-Hill station closed from 07.00 to 08.50 because of a local power failure, while stations closed for a lack of staff were Chancery Lane (17.00 to 23.40) and Regent's Park (after 18.35). A lack of Train Operators saw the District Line's High Street Kensington – Olympia shuttle service suspended from 15.40 to 21.30.

Bank station closed in the early hours of Night Tube from 03.55 to 04.25 on **Sunday 22 December** because of a fire alarm activation. Also closed were Regent's Park (before 15.50 and after 20.40) and Chancery Lane (after 18.30), both for a lack of staff. A Network Rail points failure at Stonebridge Park suspended the Bakerloo Line north of Queen's Park from 16.55 to 18.00 and again from 19.45 to 20.40. The Euston-Watford DC service was similarly affected. The combination of defective stock and lack of Train Operators set the Central Line into 'delays' mode for much of the day.

On **Monday 23 December**, Kentish Town station reopened after its 18-month long closure for escalator replacement and structural repair. Stations closed for a lack of staff were Chancery Lane (before 07.10) and Goodge Street (after 23.15). Marble Arch station closed from 14.55 to 20.00 for crowd prevention measures. The Edgware branch of the Northern Line was suspended from 16.10 to 16.50 because of a track fire between Hampstead and Belsize Park on the southbound. Passenger action on a westbound train at Piccadilly Circus delayed the already below-par Piccadilly Line service for 25 minutes from 22.25. A defective train at Elephant & Castle suspended the Bakerloo Line south of Piccadilly Circus from 00.05 until the end of traffic.

On Christmas Eve, **Tuesday 24 December**, stations closed for a lack of staff were Nine Elms (Before 06.50) and Clapham South (before 10.55). A Network Rail points failure just north of Queen's Park from 16.50 suspended the Bakerloo Line north of Queen's Park until 17.45. A repeat failure at 20.25 caused a further 15-minute delay.

The Piccadilly Line never did resume a regular service to Uxbridge (q.v.), with the situation predicted likely to continue well into January at least, and maybe beyond.

In all other respects, the Underground network closed down without incident at the planned Sunday times. A summary of services scheduled now follows, but the details of what actually happened will be in the Diary in the next issue of *Underground News*.



Above: The broken sign on the northbound Victoria Line platform at Highbury & Islington on 24 December, which caused delays to the Victoria Line from mid-morning until late lunch time, when it was removed.

Photo: Transport for London