

THE EAST LONDON LINE BOWS OUT

As planned, the East London Line closed at the end of traffic on Saturday 22 December (actually in the early hours of Sunday 23 December 2007) for its conversion into the London Overground network with extensions at its both northern and southern ends.

It was noted on Sunday 1 December 2007 that orange stickers had been applied to train windows advising of the closure from 22 December. These were above the joint Met/ELL line identification stickers which, of course, became redundant on double-ended units from the same date. There were also plenty of larger self-adhesive orange stickers at stations promoting the same. The digitised voice announcements on the Jubilee Line had also been altered (early) to advise passengers to catch the replacement bus service at Canada Water interchange station. However, instruction notices were displayed to Train Operators to override this particular announcement up to 22 December. (*One Jubilee Line train on 22 December was noted as not having the revised announcements!*).

On Sunday 16 December, the LT Museum's 1938 Tube Stock four-car train operated a special tour, which included trips on the line, although being restricted to ticket holders. The last time that 1938 Stock operated on the East London was just over 30 years ago back in June 1977 when it was replaced by A Stock. The train started and ended at Ealing Broadway and ran to and from the East London Line via the District Line and St. Mary's Curve. On the East London Line four trips were worked to the southern termini, two to each, with two extended layovers and one ordinary reversal in platform No.6 at Whitechapel. (*Photos of the event will be included in the April 2008 issue of Underground News – Ed.*). On 16 December the two photographs (opposite) show the track laid on the old Deptford Road Junction alignment which appears to be ready to serve a loading area in conjunction with the line's upgrade.

Both photos: Kim Rennie





Ticket offices were closed after Monday 17 December as part of the closure preparations so that 'work could commence' although it was unsure quite what, as the ticket machines remained in use, right up to the last day. Route learning on the replacement bus services was also noted as taking place during latter part of the last week.

Although the East London Line is not normally in the headlines, the final few days were interesting, to say the least. On Thursday 20 December at 06.45 a signal failure at Canal Junction suspended the East London Line in its entirety. Once stalled trains had been dealt with (which meant moving some trains empty to clear platforms, so that those stalled could reach platforms), a limited service was introduced between Surrey Quays and Whitechapel from 07.40. Once a frozen trainstop had been de-iced, services resumed at 09.00.

A non-service-affecting problem on the East London Line occurred at 21.35 on the same day. The evening empty stock changeover move from New Cross depot back to Neasden depot became stalled on St. Mary's North Curve, reportedly off current. Fortunately its location meant that there was no adverse effect on either the District or East London lines in that it was clear of Whitechapel Junction (East London) but hadn't reached St. Mary's Junction (District). Gap jumper leads were sought to move the train but time had progressed so that it was too late for it to proceed via Aldgate East and on to Neasden. By leaving traction current on the East London Line after the close of traffic, it was later possible to move the train back 'wrong line' onto the northbound East London south of Whitechapel Junction and then work it

into Whitechapel ELL station under normal signals. The train arrived back at New Cross depot at 02.55.

For the last day of service the normal working timetable was suspended and instead a special Timetable Notice 198/07 operated instead. This saw the normal morning and midday service provided (6½-7 minutes Whitechapel – Surrey Quays and 13-13½ minutes each to New Cross and New Cross Gate) with five trains in service. However, from 15.00 an enhanced service was provided with one extra train. This enabled a 5½ minute service Whitechapel – Surrey Quays and 11 minutes each to New Cross and New Cross Gate. Train Operators ‘stepped back’ one train at Whitechapel to achieve the short turn-round times. At lunch time on Saturday 22 December, the service was being worked as follows:

	North	South
Train 171	5056–6056–6057–5057	
Train 172	5112–6112–6113–5113	
Train 173	5058–6058–6059–5059	
Train 174	5064–6064–6065–5065	
Train 175	5060–6060–6061–5061	
Spare New Cross	5066–6066–6067–5067	
Spare New Cross	5098–6098–6099–5099	

During the evening, it was noted that there weren’t that many people around although there were a number of ‘familiar’ faces about. A group of retired former motormen were chatting about the old days – hand-worked doors, freight trains etc. Passenger numbers were also modest at 22.00. Upstairs, the bus replacement decals were being fixed to the stops by a team of two with a van. Altogether, the last day was really a low-key affair, and the hoped-for appearance of a three-car unrefurbished D Stock on the last day didn’t materialise. It was unit 5066–6066–6067–5067 that formed the additional train in the afternoon, working train 176. This was indeed the last train to arrive in the depot – to sounds of exploding detonators! This train worked the last train from New Cross (00.32) to Whitechapel and last train from Whitechapel (00.47) to New Cross Gate. But the very last passenger train of all (00.40 New Cross Gate to Whitechapel and 00.59 Whitechapel to New Cross) was formed by train 172. Passenger numbers were fairly light for the last train and just a small number of hardcore enthusiasts turned out in the end. This was no doubt due to the time of year and the lack of any “special train”. However, the passage of the last train was still quite poignant.

Provision was made for four paths to return the trains from New Cross to Neasden on both Sunday 23 December and Monday 24 December, the latter being a contingency in case of any problems the previous day. In the event, all went smoothly and the trains departed to Neasden on Sunday morning in the following order:

- Train 174 ex-No.6 road – 5066–6066–6067–5067+5098–6098–6099–5099
- Train 175 ex-No.4 road – 5056–6056–6057–5057+5064–6064–6065–5065
- Train 176 ex-No.3 road – 5060–6060–6061–5061
- Train 177 ex-No.5 road – 5058–6058–6059–5059+5112–6112–6113–5113

The depot was then clear of trains. On Monday 24 December 2007 current was switched on as normal but as soon as the remaining ancillary work had been

completed, it was taken off for the last time. At 15.07 the keys were handed over to Metronet and the last Manager to leave New Cross turned the lights out! All power was then disconnected, the signalling de-commissioned, so that work could begin in earnest.

It has been suggested that the four Clayton battery locomotives used on the Waterloo & City Line upgrade (Walter, Lou Ann [and!] Kitty) may be used on engineers' trains during the East London Line's forthcoming reconstruction.



Above: Luck found the tunnel lighting on between Rotherhithe and Wapping on the last day enabling a better view of the previously refurbished Thames Tunnel. This is at Wapping looking south down the northbound tunnel.

Photo: Brian Hardy

As mentioned in a previous issue of *Underground News*, three replacement bus services have been provided, plus that for the previous closure to Shoreditch in June 2006. The four routes are:

- ELS Shoreditch – Whitechapel (Rush hours and Sundays until 15.15).
- ELW Whitechapel – Shadwell – Wapping.
- ELP Rotherhithe – Canada Water.
- ELC Canada Water – Surrey Quays – New Cross – New Cross Gate.

No service is provided directly crossing the River Thames between Wapping and Rotherhithe stations. See overleaf for further details of the services provided.