

# **UNDERGROUND ITEMS FROM THE TELEVISION AN OCCASIONAL SERIES**

**by Paul Creswell**

**“THE TUBE: GOING UNDERGROUND” – CHANNEL 5 – 21.00 TO 22.00**

**BROADCAST ON CONSECUTIVE MONDAYS  
FROM 21 MARCH 2016 TO 9 MAY 2016**

There were a total of eight programmes in this series. By agreement between the editor and your reviewer, the full review was thought to be too large for one issue of *Underground News* and it has thus been split into two parts, each one covering four programmes. Thus, this second review covers programmes five to eight inclusive (18 April to 9 May inclusive). The review of the first four programmes appeared in *Underground News* No.656, pages 455 to 464.

Where names are quoted, the spelling is as shown on a caption when the person concerned was speaking. In some cases, names were not shown, and your reviewer has offered his ‘best guess’ at the correct spelling, which may, thus, not be correct. Apologies are offered to any individual whose name has thus been spelt incorrectly.

Warning: There are one or two sections of this review containing slightly unpleasant matters.

## **MONDAY 18 APRIL 2016**

This programme was the fifth in the series. In this programme the accent was on New Year’s Eve and the all-night service operated for the event, this being the only time this happens (at least until the ‘Night Tube’ is eventually introduced!).

This shift was rated as the busiest and toughest of the year. Many extra staff are asked to work this night shift, to assist with the vast numbers of extra passengers. Events commenced around 18.00, with people beginning to arrive in central London.

### **TRAIN OPERATOR**

We met Sabrina, a train operator on the Northern Line, who had volunteered to work this shift, it being her first New Year’s one. She is a single mum with two children, a boy of five years and a girl of nine years. Luckily, she has a large family to look after both of them while she works.

Sabrina explained that one of the things she most disliked were people who hold the doors from closing, even attempting to push them open as well. We were shown an incident of this nature, where the passenger concerned only let the door close and walked away when the police had been summoned to the train concerned.

She has to stay ‘level headed’ and make sure that she attempts to keep her passengers safe. She is also particularly aware (especially on this shift) of drunks on crowded platforms. Her hand stays by the ‘deadman’ device, to apply the emergency brakes should such action be needed.

### **PICCADILLY CIRCUS**

Some 200 staff are provided at this station for the New Year’s Eve celebrations. We met Masooma, Station Control Room Assistant, who noticed, on the closed circuit television screen, a lady fall on an escalator. She directed staff to assist the woman and this resulted in the closure of the escalator concerned. In turn, this resulted in a need to reduce the flow of incoming passengers, which meant at least one entrance subway being closed. As had been seen in previous programmes, some passengers were obviously very upset at being ‘turned away’ and were thus quite vociferous with their protestations!

Lewis (Customer Service Assistant) was tasked with keeping the crowds moving, using his loudhailer to achieve this. Rory (also a Customer Service Assistant) was covering his first New Year’ Eve shift, but very glad to do so, as a £500 bonus is paid for those working this shift.

Later, the countdown to midnight had almost arrived. Shortly after midnight, the rush to get home started, causing the biggest crowds of the whole event. Not only was there a tendency for everyone involved to arrive almost together, but many had been drinking for up to five hours!

Later still, Lewis commented that things were going quite well, only to be interrupted by a report of a fight on platform 3 (westbound Piccadilly Line), (but were these items ‘edited together’ for the

programme?). Lewis commented that people do not seem to understand the dangers of moving trains and also of the live rails. Having seen the effects himself, he was a little more aware of what could happen as a result of any unconsidered actions. Liz (also a Station Assistant) thought that this would not be the last such incident this night.

In the early morning, the flow of many drunken people was now slowing down. For some, the drink has really taken its toll. A man had urinated on another passenger on platform 3 and, with the help of police, staff conducted him out of the station. It was remarked that 99 per cent of passengers were laughing and sociable, with only the one percent (or so) being 'unsociable' in any way.

### **SYSTEM CONTROL CENTRE**

At 20.15, staff had just commenced a 12-hour shift. We met a 'regular' from previous programmes in the series, Richie, an Incident Response Manager. The centre manages all 270 stations on the network.

Senior Operating Officer Dan explained that the centre staff attempt to keep a low profile and just try to keep things moving steadily, without, as far as possible, interfering too much themselves. They hope to remain 'anonymous' as far as the rest of the staff on the system are concerned.

Superintendent Andy Morgan was co-ordinating the British Transport Police activity on this shift. Police had been drafted in from areas outside London and, in his case, presumably from Wales, as his sleeve displayed 'HEDDLU POLICE'.

Later, there was an incident at Waterloo Bridge, involving a 'suspicious package'. Dan mentioned that, following recent serious incidents in Paris and, more locally, a stabbing at Leytonstone, there was a heightened sense of security, both for passengers and staff. The item was later found to be of no danger, being consigned to 'lost property' after due investigation.

Later in the night, Dan was advised that a 'crime scene' had been declared at St. Paul's, on the westbound Central Line, where a woman had been injured. Incident Response Manager Richie (with some 18 years' experience) and Police Medic Andy 'pre-empted' being sent to the scene by heading there anyway. Richie remarked that they could be called to anything from a signal failure to a derailment or even a person under a train. Once on scene, they needed to liaise with local police units and station staff. In this case, police had closed the westbound platform, which, luckily in the case of this station, is one of just a few cases where the two platforms are at different levels, making such arrangements slightly easier to facilitate. Westbound trains were, naturally, non-stopping the station. Upon arrival, Andy quickly determined that the injury to the passenger concerned was quite small, so nothing more than a plaster was needed, medically at least. Whilst Richie and Andy assist the police at such an incident, they always have, in the back of their minds, the effects on the train service.

Whilst still at St. Paul's, reports were received (by Richie) of a person hit by a train at Clapham North. Upon arrival there, it transpired that the woman concerned had been declared deceased and the emergency services were in the process of removing the body. Richie told us that they must always treat such incidents with a caring approach. However, removal of a body could be more quickly achieved for the deceased than for someone still living and thus needing very careful removal. Such incidents, like most in fact, were entirely unpredictable. The incident had been declared non-suspicious (i.e. suicide) and Richie paused to wonder how anyone could get in such a situation, especially at the New Year, to decide to give up life entirely. Andy added that it was a terrible way to go, with all the metal equipment under the train. Richie tries not to let such incidents have any effect on him and attempts to regard it as simply another 'operating incident'.

### **HOLBORN**

Police Inspector Tony Richards briefed his staff and suggested that laughing and joking with the revellers made for 'good relations'. We accompanied him around the station, where he removed open alcohol bottles, etc., from travellers. Alcohol, we were reminded, has been banned on the underground since 2008. Tony remarked that alcohol is the single biggest issue at such times as this – it made some people very happy and some people very aggressive.

### **EMBANKMENT**

This station was seeing an estimated 100,000 passing through, as it is situated close to the fireworks display associated with the New Year. This figure was about treble the traffic on a normal evening.

Station Supervisor Tony had worked New Year's Eve for the last ten years. He expected to have to close the entrance gates at times. He had the use of extra staff, but pointed out that, as they were not known to him, he could not readily judge their 'strengths and weaknesses'.

Lubo, a Cleaning Supervisor, formed part of a 24-hour cleaning operation at Embankment (and presumably many other West End stations?). He and his staff took a short break to watch the fireworks display. He observed that huge crowds make for a huge cleaning operation, just as in his native Bulgaria. Also, as in Bulgaria, people visited pubs, had a couple of glasses of Vodka and then were sick. He recalled a particularly messy incident (in London) involving faeces, further details of which have no place in this journal!

By around one hour after midnight, the crowds (from the firework display beside the River Thames) are returning home and they begin to 'swamp' the station. Entrance gates were closed and, in one instance shown to viewers, intending passengers were advised to take a 'four-minute walk' to the next station (Temple)! (Your reviewer certainly could not manage it in double that!). Later, as the rush of people subsided, Tony (Station Supervisor) commented that "if you could bottle happiness you would have some very fortunate people!"

In the early morning, Lubo and his staff were busy cleaning up the various piles of vomit around the station, as well as assisting 'lost' passengers upon their weary way!

A little later, the flow of normal 'commuters' restarted and the party night was 'officially' over!

## **MONDAY 25 APRIL 2016**

This programme was the sixth in the series. In this programme, the accent was on escalator renewal at Walthamstow Central, revenue protection and also modernisation at Tottenham Court Road. We also met a film and 'soap' star helping out on the system!

### **ESCALATOR RENEWAL AT WALTHAMSTOW CENTRAL**

At the time of filming, there was only one escalator operational at Walthamstow Central (usually two), so the single remaining escalator was operating in the up direction just at the morning peak hour and down for the rest of the day.

Escalator Engineer Adam explained that the refurbishment now under way was costing some £1.3-million. Initially, a very large clean was needed, as 'people are very dirty', he advised us! Installation was to very meticulous standards, even including a 'finger detecting device', in case anyone's hand got trapped – this device would, hopefully, prevent any loss of fingers!

New recruit Leon was posted to the station to encourage people to use the escalator more efficiently, possibly by walking rather than standing on the left side. Your reviewer thought back to the first programme in this series (21 March 2016 – see the first review in this series) where, at Holborn, passengers were encouraged to stand on the left to increase the flow of people. Your reviewer is interested that both approaches can be correct! Leon's tactics divided passengers' opinions, with most chuckling with him, or even giving him a piece of fruit. Some, however, were not happy and one even handed him a note threatening to 'report him'!

Viewers were told that, unlike escalators for shopping malls, etc., which could be delivered complete to site, those on the Underground were 'bespoke' and were tailored for the particular station where they were installed. They had to be able to operate 18 hours a day, seven days a week. As the escalators got older, the time allowed for replacement tended to get shorter, such was the passenger demand to have them back in service.

Station Supervisor Isaac told us that people questioned why the station needed a supervisor at night, with no trains running. However, there were often engineering works underway, such as the escalator renewal programme currently in progress.

### **TRAIN OPERATOR MARCOS (VICTORIA LINE)**

Driver Marcus likened the Victoria Line to an Aston Martin, the Northern Line to a BMW and the Bakerloo Line to a Ford Fiesta!

### **REVENUE PROTECTION**

Revenue Control Inspectors Marcus and Paul advised viewers that an estimated £34-million was lost to fare 'dodgers' each year. In about two hours of riding up and down a short section of line, they

apprehended some five persons not paying their fares. The peak time for such activity is around 19.00 and they get quite used to receiving insults in their work.

Undercover Ticket Inspectors Paul and Simon were seen at Mornington Crescent station. They watched the station's television cameras where a man, previously noticed by the station supervisor, was seen 'shadowing' passengers through the ticket gates, so as to utilise that person's ticket to exit the station, thus without any charge to himself. A little later, Paul and Simon were at Mornington Crescent just before the man concerned was expected to exit the station. Sure enough, he appeared and 'tried his luck' once again, his habit of so doing now stretching back some weeks. He was quite abject and admitted having no ticket, but said that he had no money. He was advised that the Underground was not a free service. Simon commented that some travellers will continually take the chance of being caught. A £40 fine once or twice each year is still cheaper than buying a valid ticket. There are those who just will not be deterred.

To, hopefully, assist with increasing revenue, 'Operation Falcon' was initiated by the Revenue team, seen at their headquarters at Pelham Street, South Kensington. Led by London Underground's own 'Detective Inspector' Dan, the team intended to concentrate on a number of 'known villains' who were costing the company a considerable amount in lost revenue.

Viewers were able to observe as two long-term known fare evaders were tracked, using the 'Oyster' card that just one of them carried for the journey from Woolwich Arsenal to Kentish Town. Revenue staff were able to monitor their whole journey and, as they neared Kentish Town, arranged to intercept them and check what tickets (if any) they carried. It was interesting to note that the use of Oyster cards allows the carrier to be followed (electronically) throughout their journey – it appears that this was an excellent part of the design feature of these cards. It seems that some people, when they are apprehended, behave quite well, but others tend to 'kick off' and an example was shown to the cameras (but your suspicious reviewer wonders, once again, if this was generated for the cameras by using one of the film crew?). Where such incidents happen, the Inspectors use the evidence of their body cameras and speak to the police to see if, perhaps, the miscreants are known to the police for other reasons, as this would seem quite a possibility. The two men questioned at Kentish Town were a little shocked, but behaved quite well, eventually admitting their guilt. They were liable for a fine of £1,000 and/or a jail sentence.

Dan had been some thirteen years on the Revenue team and has been seriously assaulted on three occasions, the last in 2011. He showed viewers pictures of the scars on his arm and wrist, where the man concerned had severely bitten him. He was obliged to accept such events as a part of his job.

At Belsize Park, there were reports of a man regularly 'shadowing' people through the barriers, thus using their ticket to exit the station and avoiding payment himself. He did this regularly between the same hours, so was fairly quickly spotted and apprehended. He claimed that he could not afford a ticket as he was homeless. His story was listened to by the Revenue Control Inspectors and arrangements were made to allow him out at his destination station, with a warning about any repetition of the event.

### **TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD**

John, a Supervising Tiler, described how it was his team's job to re-install the Eduardo Paolozzi tiled mosaics on the platform walls, these dating from 1984. His team had to fit in their work with much else taking place around them. He recalled his first visit to the station in 1982, when it was last being refurbished. Once recently, when the night's work had been put up with one tile out of place, his team had to replace the tiles the next shift! Also, instances had occurred where (in areas accessible to the public) tiles left overnight to 'set' had been prized out by 'tourists' before they could set. It seems that the tourists prefer coloured to white tiles! However, he felt much satisfaction in his work, which he considered was far better than tiling a bathroom or a supermarket floor!

Nick Brown, Managing Director of London Underground (*who has since left the company – Ed.*) explained that the problem with the £1.5-billion modernisation programme underway on stations, trains, escalators, etc., was that it had to be done whilst keeping the trains running, somewhat akin to open-heart surgery.

David Waboso, Capital Projects Director (*who has since joined Network Rail as Managing Director, Digital Railway – Ed.*) visited the completed station and was admiring the modernistic-looking new glass roof. He queried how it was to be cleaned and was then met with a row of blank faces from the assembled engineers, etc.

An expenditure of £0.5-billion pounds and eight months of disruption for passengers has resulted in a doubling of the station's size, as well as a splendid improvement in appearance. The changes were perhaps best summed up by Cal and Bob, two Customer Service Assistants at the station, who remarked that it had previously been old, dingy, overcrowded, smelly, freezing in winter, dated, dull, claustrophobic and damp!

To allow a 'final push' to complete all the work needed, the station was closed for a full weekend. As might be expected, some passengers' views on this situation were not over-enthusiastic!

The station finally re-opened on schedule. One of the Customer Service Assistants said that he likened the change to the "black hole of Calcutta becoming an open field in summertime!" This seemed a pretty reasonable simile to your reviewer. David Waboso arrived (by Central Line train, possibly from Woodford, judging by the views shown) and congratulated those present who had been involved with the project, in various disciplines. He admitted to a big relief that everything had happened within the scheduled timescale.

### **WESTMINSTER (AND OTHER CIRCLE LINE STATIONS)**

Long-time film and 'soap' star Barbara Windsor was brought in by London Underground to assist in advertising 'Poppy Day'. Barbara rode on the front of a Circle Line train (accompanied, however, by one view quite clearly taken from the cab of a 'tube' train!) and made some appropriate public announcements. On the train, the Revenue staff (and others) asked for donations instead of outstanding fares!

---

## **MONDAY 2 MAY 2016**

This programme was the seventh in the series. In this programme, the accent was very firmly on security. We heard about this subject from a Duty Reliability Manager, a Trainer inducting new staff, Earl's Court Control Room (District and Piccadilly lines), the Network Control Centre and two stations, Bank/Monument and Southwark.

### **DUTY RELIABILITY MANAGER**

Viewers met Mark, Duty Reliability Manager on the Northern Line. He pointed out that the Underground was on its highest ever security level and the 20,000 staff were constantly on the look-out for 'suspicious packages'. He attended a report of an unattended bag at Camden Town and checked the carriage of a northbound train reported to contain it. Nothing was found and the passengers present seemed unaware of anything that had happened in their journey as far as Camden Town. He told us that there were fewer reports in recent times concerning such matters, as people seemed to keep the underground train bombings of July 2005 in mind. (In those tragic events, some 52 persons were killed and over 700 injured). However, you could never be complacent about such matters.

Mark had been advised (by management we presume) of what action to take in the case of security or terrorist alerts, but he was not at liberty to divulge this information to the camera (perhaps not surprisingly!).

### **BANK/MONUMENT**

This station was an ideal 'proving ground' for new entrants. Nyeem (Customer Service Assistant) was on platform duty and was tasked with letting the Station Control Room know of any problems arising and also keeping the passengers moving, as far as he was able. The station sees some 350,000 passengers each day. Station Controller Pat described it as a 'monster' of a station, with its ten platforms (including the integrated Monument station). It operates at an estimated 90 per cent capacity, compared to many other 'busy' stations at around 75 per cent capacity. Being a focal point of the City's financial district, it was a possible target for terrorists.

Smooth running was then affected by a signal failure on the Central Line. Pat remarked that consequent delays could reflect along the line and affect, for example, the Piccadilly Line at Holborn.

Pat said that being on platform duty meant staying sharp, being aware of the atmosphere on the platform and watching people's body language. He felt Nyeem was one who would 'go the extra mile' to be helpful and had a good future on the system, as he was a 'people person'. This last comment was shown to good effect when the service on the Central Line ceased for a while and passengers needed assistance for alternative routings.

### **INDUCTION OF NEW STAFF**

London Underground were in the process of employing some 1,000 new Customer Service Assistants. Apparently, 56 people had applied for each vacancy. It was Trainer Lynda's job to coach them for their varied tasks.

Viewers saw Lynda showing the trainees how to make an initial investigation of a suspicious package, checking for wires and powder in particular. She advised them that passengers really disliked being evacuated from platforms/stations. However, if you mentioned the magic words 'security alert' they would then respond, most of them remembering the tragic events of some ten years ago.

The trainees also had to master the many abbreviations and acronyms used on the system. Even Mark, Duty Reliability Manager (see above) could not remember them all and had to ask a Customer Service Assistant to remind him of the meaning of one!

Charlotte, Piccadilly Line Controller, joined the system about one week after the July 2005 bombings and remembered that her class was only about half attended, as the bombings had obviously discouraged quite a few potential members of staff. She felt that the job attracted loyal staff, who were not intimidated by the size or demands of the system.

Viewers watched as some of the trainees were introduced to the 'art' of making announcements on platforms, at Earl's Court (District Line platforms) and King's Cross (Circle, Hammersmith & City and Metropolitan Line platforms).

Later the trainee intake was given their final examination results, the exam consisting of a 75-minute period to answer forty multiple choice questions. Amazingly, all passed and became qualified Customer Service Assistants. (Your reviewer's scepticism steps in here to ask if they really all passed, or was that bit 'for the cameras'?).

### **EARLS COURT CONTROL ROOM**

Viewers were present when reports of an incident concerning a man shouting about the so-called 'Islamic State' and 'blowing up trains' were received, from frightened passengers who left the westbound Piccadilly Line train concerned and spoke to station staff. Charlotte, Line Controller, responsible for the 78 trains on the line, arranged for the British Transport Police to be advised. The train was held at Earl's Court whilst a Police Community Support officer investigated the reports. It appeared to viewers that the man had already left the train by then.

Sheryal (Line Information Specialist) explained that there was a need to balance the investigation of the incident with keeping the service running, bearing in mind that the delay to the one train would cause others to be waiting in the tunnels at its rear, delaying possibly thousands of other passengers in the process.

Charlotte remarked that the situation was 'scary', especially as no one in the Control Room could do anything except watch (on the closed circuit television screens) events unfold. She also told us that passengers were far more aware of security since the events of 2005. Some 15 years ago the thoughts were that 'it will never happen'. Now the thinking was that 'it will happen'. See also the item 'Simulated Major Incident' below.

### **TRAINEE TRAIN DRIVER**

We met 54-year-old Customer Service Assistant Danuta, who was hoping to become a Train Driver. She had been selected from over 6,000 applicants to take part in the 14-week course involved.

Later, we joined her on the Piccadilly Line with Instructor Chris, being shown how to deal with slippery rails whilst driving the manually operated trains on that line. She was also seen 'taking on board' the 'theoretical' aspect of train driving, learning about all the switches, fuses and circuits involved in an Underground train. Chris pointed out that some new starters to driving were born for the job and some struggled with it. He felt that Danuta was just a trifle old to be starting an entirely new career.

The day for Danuta's final test came and she passed and so was to be 'let loose on a train' (her own words).

### **EXPERIENCED TRAIN DRIVER**

When driving a route 26 bus, Driver Mark had heard a noise and asked his passengers to leave the bus at the next stop, suspecting a mechanical problem. He had looked upstairs, noticing a 'metallic' smell, and found a rucksack, which he described as 'ripped open'. He then realised that he had heard a detonator explode, though, fortunately, the bomb had not exploded.

He later retrained as an Underground driver and was seen on the District Line. An interesting effect, noticed by your reviewer when repeating some items in slow motion was that, whilst the information imparted (verbally) by Mark was continuous, the accompanying shots of him in his cab constantly moved from the west end of the District Line, then to the east end, then back to the west end, etc. Quite a neat 'editing' trick!

### **SOUTHWARK**

We were introduced to Barry, one of some 5,000 station staff on the system. He was carrying out a check of the station, particularly looking for 'suspect packages' and ensuring that nothing was hidden in odd corners of the station superstructure. As he went around, he was also checking that the systems (such as the ticket barriers) were functioning correctly.

He was handed a bag by a passenger, who had found it on a train. He was careful to turn off his radio before investigating it, in case the radio might set it off, had it actually been a bomb. It transpired that it was a 'safe' bag after all.

Barry advised viewers that, when making platform announcements, he often felt a bit like rebelling and singing a little 'snatch' from a Whitney Houston or Jackie Wilson number. A passing passenger commented that it might be alright, but once only would be enough! Barry was about to retire, but we did not find out if he succumbed to the (singing) temptation in his final shifts!

Later, we met Barry on his final day on the station, still tidying discarded newspapers to the very end and saying 'goodbye' to all his colleagues!

### **NETWORK CONTROL CENTRE**

The centre, not surprisingly, got involved in the incident (see item 'Earl's Court Control Room' above) on the westbound Piccadilly Line train, which, we learnt was car 609 of train 240, it being the fifth car of that train. British Transport Police Commander Andy Morgan remarked that, back in 1983 it was the Irish Republican Army that were causing similar problems; now it was the so-called 'Islamic State'. The police had assets in place to deal with such events and to respond quickly to them when they did occur. It was later found, after due investigation, that the man concerned was not carrying weapons or explosives, but had certainly caused a level of panic amongst his fellow passengers.

### **SIMULATED MAJOR INCIDENT**

Ever since the July 2005 bombings, the Underground and the various emergency services had worked closely together to refine their 'combined' response to emergencies affecting London's transport systems. For this simulated incident, some 70 organisations and about 2,000 individuals worked together to try to ensure that they had the right equipment and expertise to deal with whatever might occur.

The exercise was held at a disused power station near Dartford. This was intended to simulate the collapse of a tower block on to Waterloo station. An eight-car train<sup>1</sup> (somewhat inappropriately, for a scenario based at Waterloo, using withdrawn D Stock!) had been placed, at all sorts of precarious angles, in the building and the rescue services (and the Underground's Incident Response Team) were tasked with rescuing the various volunteers who posed as injured passengers at the 'station' and on the 'trains'. The scenario was that this had happened either as a natural disaster or an act of terrorism. Efforts had to be made to secure the train's 'black box' recorder, even while 'passengers' were still being 'rescued', for investigation by the Rail Accident Investigation Board. The exercise lasted four days (at least).

Rupert from the Incident Response Team remarked that the next time that such a thing happens it will not be in a disused power station in Dartford, but for real.

---

## **MONDAY 9 MAY 2016**

This programme was the last of the series of eight. In this programme, the subjects covered were traffic levels, Oxford Circus, Vauxhall and Hyde Park Corner stations, Crossrail (Bond Street station) and new trains.

### **TRAFFIC LEVELS**

---

<sup>1</sup> *Eight D Stock trailer carriages were used. Ed.*

The weeks leading up to Christmas are the busiest of the year, combining workers, shoppers and party-goers travelling on the system. Viewers were advised that the system originally opened carrying some 38,000 passengers each day and had now reached a level of almost five million each day. The future looked to be even busier and the obvious answer was to build more lines and stations. The disused Battersea power station was being converted into shops, offices, hotels and apartments and David Waboso (formerly Director of Capital Programmes) pointed out that this extension of the Northern Line was the first new line since the Jubilee Line, back in the 1990s.

Last year, London's population reached eight million and this was one reason why Crossrail (see 'Bond Street' below) was now being built.

### **OXFORD CIRCUS**

It was Saturday 5 December and millions of shoppers had descended on the West End. At almost 100-million passengers a year, Oxford Circus is the most used station on the whole network.

An incident at Leyton (which later transpired to actually be at the next station, Leytonstone) thought to be possibly terrorist related, caused the eastbound Central Line to be suspended. Anything which might be terrorist related is, naturally, considered a major concern. Later on, the service in both directions was suspended and viewers saw efforts being made to persuade potential Central Line passengers to use alternative routes to reach their destinations. TJ (Station Supervisor) was observed closing gates to the Central Line platforms. Some passengers clearly do not listen to the announcements being broadcast, which TJ observed was probably because they 'do not want to know' about the real situation.

Later, we met Stan, (Customer Service Assistant) who had completed some thirty years of service. He had come to London from Northern Ireland in about 1980 and been employed as a bus conductor. A while later, his then manager advised him that there were vacancies on the Underground and he had transferred there in about 1984. He had developed his own form of 'sign language' so as to cross the language barrier when dealing with tourists from abroad, and even some local folks! His Underground career had commenced in the booking office (now gone) and he had seen many changes over the years. He was one of the longest serving members of the team at Oxford Circus.

Later on, Stan's last day of service was reached. He told viewers that he intended to keep up with events at the station and also on the Underground generally.

### **CROSSRAIL – BOND STREET**

Lead Engineer Anita was responsible for some two miles of new passenger subways beneath Bond Street station that would connect the existing underground lines to the new Crossrail line, a complex project we were told. The work had to take place whilst Londoners continued shopping and partying above ground. Anita told us that some tunnels were dug by hand; however, London clay made an excellent material in which to tunnel, as opposed, for example, to sand.

At 21.00 one Saturday evening, we joined a briefing for staff involved in the 'break through' from the Underground's passenger tunnels to those of Crossrail. A concrete wall separated the two areas and this had to be measured for both thickness and weight before the process of its demolition could commence. This work was being carried out some one hundred feet below Bond Street. A specialist machine called a 'Brock', seemingly designed specifically for such work, performed the break-through, which, the engineering team were pleased to note, lined up precisely with the tunnel at the other side.

Later, we joined the (then) Mayor of London, Boris Johnson and the Her Majesty the Queen at Bond Street when the new line, known as Crossrail for many years past, was renamed the *Elizabeth Line* in the Queen's honour. By 2018, the line was expected to carry some half million passengers each day, many of whom would interchange with the Underground at Bond Street.

### **VAUXHALL**

The programme visited Vauxhall station at 06.00 on a Sunday morning. 'Clubbers', who had been out all night, were waiting for the station to open. In order to make her hourly security checks, the station supervisor used a slightly hidden door to reach the public areas, worried that a more obvious entrance would allow those waiting in the passageways to gain access to the platforms before the station actually opened. She found she had to act as a health worker, psychologist, social worker and "mother" to the people waiting, some having fallen asleep on the station steps!

### **NEW TRAINS**



New trains were appearing across the network. Driver Chris, on the Piccadilly Line, observed that the new trains were much better and that his cab felt cramped by comparison. Driver Ruth, in the cab of an S Stock, appreciated the plush surroundings and the new technology now available to her.

Alan, a Train Engineer, told us that 192 trains were in the process of being delivered for the District, Circle and Hammersmith and City lines, at the rate of one each week. The cost was about one million pounds per car. It was some 116 miles from the manufacturing site to the receiving depot. Upon arrival, the trains had to be electrically fitted-out, including pick-up shoes for the electrical supply from the current rails. Each train was designed to carry 865 persons, but could take many more.

Viewers joined a recently delivered train on a 'test run', which was described by one of the staff involved as a 'rattle run', where those on board were listening for any loose panels or fixings that needed attention. Not surprisingly, we were informed that points and crossings were where the 'rattles' were most exposed. The new stock was expected to be in service until at least the year 2040. Some of the scenes of the test train were clearly taken in the West Harrow and Harrow-on-the-Hill areas.

### **HYDE PARK CORNER**

In the two weeks prior to Christmas, thousands of people visit the 'Winter Wonderland' festival near this station. For Mia (Customer Services Assistant), with just six months' service, it was her first Christmas on the system. She told viewers that the station was really too small to handle the crowds for this event and a one-way system had to be put into operation. Extra staff were rostered to cope with the crowds. As a 'festival' was involved, most participants were drinking. It was quite easy for the crowd levels to build up to a 'crush' situation. Later, Mia made her way home, looking forward to having the same situation repeated the next day.

Tony (Station Supervisor) mentioned that, when the station risked becoming overcrowded, staff were positioned to prevent passengers entering and advising them to use other nearby stations such as Green Park, Victoria, Marble Arch and Bond Street. An exception to these arrangements was made for a 96-year-old war veteran who had been shot down over Germany in World War Two and had managed to evade capture. Kingsley (Customer Services Assistant) was sent to assist the gentleman down the fixed stairway (120 steps), which Kingsley thought might be too much for himself, never mind the gentleman concerned! He also commented that seeing someone of that age manage such a descent 'encourages you'!

### **RUTH (DISTRICT LINE DRIVER)**

Ruth mused on the situation in about ten years' time, when she imagined driverless trains, though still with a driver available on them.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **IN CONCLUSION**

Your reviewer considered that these eight programmes (perhaps the longest series ever on the subject?) were a good representation of many of the aspects of operating the Underground in the second decade of the 21st century.

The series was produced by 'Blast Films' and the only real criticism I have is that which applies to many such programmes shown on television. Those editing the material filmed have, obviously, no idea of the Underground, perhaps not even ever having travelled on it. We thus get (audibly) items concerning the sub-surface lines, where the accompanying pictures are clearly of tube section locations! Even the Circle Line was accompanied by a tube tunnel sequence!