

FROM THE PAPERS

Items for “From the Papers” should be sent to John Wilson at 44 Pleydell Crescent, Sturrey, Canterbury, CT2 0LQ (or E-Mail wilsonja1954@gmail.com), and not to the Editor of this journal. Please ensure that contributions are identified by date and source publication.

26.09.22 EVENING STANDARD – Workers who clean London Underground and other public transport in the capital are to be given free travel, the Mayor has announced. He has asked TfL to extend free travel on the capital’s public transport for the lowest-paid contract workers, as well as catering and security staff. The move will benefit around 5,000 workers, who were not previously eligible for free travel. He has also asked TfL to look into whether sick pay standards for the lowest paid workers could be improved and to conduct work early next year to assess TfL’s ability to bring cleaning services in house. (*What goes around, comes around! – Ed.*)

06.10.22 BBC NEWS – Three passengers were dragged along London Overground platforms in north London within the space of a week, the railway safety watchdog has revealed. A hand, walking stick and umbrella were trapped in the doors at Seven Sisters, Wembley Central and Crouch Hill stations respectively in June. Each passenger was standing at the rear door, furthest from cameras used by drivers to check it is safe to depart. There were no injuries, a Rail Accident Investigation Branch report said. None of the drivers, who all had between 10 and 23 years’ experience driving for Arriva Rail London (and its predecessors) which operates parts of London Overground, realised anything had become trapped in the doors.

10.10.22 TIME OUT – Londoners are suckers for the Underground. Sure, we moan about it constantly, but – like school, marriage and German cooking – if you can just look at it in a slightly different way, it can become magical. Specifically, we get a collective frisson as a city thinking about all the spooky shut-off tube tunnels, disused stations and plentiful ghosts below our feet. To speak to that romantic and spooky appetite, London Transport Museum has just announced a new season of its ever-popular Hidden London tours of unseen parts of the capital’s vast transport network, including some new places they’ve never visited before. There are in-person and virtual tours available, so even if you live miles from London (or don’t fancy creeping about in a filthy warren), you can still be an Underground explorer. Highlights of the new season include evening tours of Charing Cross and Down Street stations. The Jubilee line platforms at Charing Cross have been inoperative since 1999, and since used for lots of film and TV productions. Down Street station, meanwhile, is located in Mayfair, it was shut down way back in 1932 because of low passenger numbers (locals presumably all travelled by Rolls-Royce). In WWII, it was used as an air raid shelter and, intriguingly, was used by Winston Churchill during the Blitz. Another perennial favourite are the tours of Aldwych station, and there are also in-person tours of Shepherd’s Bush station’s hidden nooks and crannies, and the same at Euston.

(Editor’s note – the YouTube videos “Hidden London Hangouts” are well worth a watch, and there are plenty to choose from).

12.10.22 MY LONDON – Plans for Crossrail 2 and extending the Bakerloo Line further south are off the cards for the foreseeable future, according to Transport for London boss Andy Byford – despite agreeing a major funding deal with ministers to secure TfL’s future. Transport for London had announced plans to extend the Bakerloo line South East to Lewisham in 2017, with extra stops at Old Kent Road in Southwark and New Cross Gate in Lewisham. Work to build the extension hasn’t started, and in December, the mayor warned the £3.1 billion lengthening of the route wouldn’t go ahead because of TfL’s lack of money. In August, TfL said it will receive extra funding of around £1.2bn from the Government until March 2024 to cover the drop in fare income due to lower passenger numbers after the pandemic. However, TfL still has to find about £800m of savings for each of the next two years to stay afloat. On Tuesday, outgoing TfL commissioner Andy Byford told the London Assembly: “The deal wasn’t as much ... or as long in duration as we would have wanted. So, we’re not suddenly able to say all of the projects are back on track. We can’t reinstate Crossrail 2, we can’t reinstate the Bakerloo Line extension – not yet, but there’s still compelling cases”. He added: “I like to think that we won’t be in this situation forever, we will move to sunnier uplands. There will come a point where we are able to do more, but I should just manage people’s expectations: big ticket items are not on the horizon right now”.

13.10.22 NEW CIVIL ENGINEER – The winners of the 2022 British Construction Industry Awards (BCIA) have been revealed. Crowned during a black tie ceremony at London’s Grosvenor House Hotel last night, winning projects included Crossrail’s Woolwich station. In total, 21 companies or project teams took home gongs for a variety of awards covering innovation, environmental impact and construction and engineering excellence. The team behind Crossrail’s Woolwich Station took home the NIC Design Principles Award, which recognises projects that are exemplar in terms of design and judges them against the National Infrastructure Commission’s (NIC) Design Group’s four key principles of climate, people, place and value. Judges described it as “a simple and robust engineering and architectural solution to a complex brief”.

13.10.22 EVENING STANDARD – The Heathrow Express is offering to fast track travellers through airport security in a growing battle with the Elizabeth Line for passengers. The non-stop service, which links Heathrow (T2 & 3) and Paddington in 15 minutes, faces a new challenge when Elizabeth Line start running direct from Canary Wharf and the West End to the airport from 6 November. The Elizabeth Line trains will take at least twice as long but the £12.80 fare from Zone 1 will be just over half the price of a £25 standard single on the Heathrow Express. In a bid to attract passengers to its “premium” service, the Heathrow Express has begun offering free rapid fast track transit through the airport – bypassing often lengthy security queues – for those who upgrade to a £32 first class single ticket. This applies to all its first class passengers even if they are flying economy. Transport for London scrapped its cheaper off-peak Heathrow fares last month (see page 732, this issue), meaning the Elizabeth Line costs £12.80 and an Underground journey costs £5.50 throughout the day.

13.10.22 EVENING STANDARD – Free travel for Londoners aged 60 and older that was axed during the pandemic may never be restored. A long-delayed review of whether to restore free travel before 09.00 for holders of the 60+ Oyster or Freedom Pass is due by the end of the year. The £230m funding gap in TfL’s finances meant the restriction may have to be retained, forcing older Londoners to pay to travel before 09.00 which raises about £15m a year in fares. The time restriction was introduced by TfL in June 2020 to “reduce crowding” and “help social distancing”. However, its retention became part of the Government’s bail-out deals that required TfL to generate additional income. TfL is also continuing to explore whether to withdraw from the Travelcard scheme that allows rail passengers to buy a ticket that includes Underground and bus travel. It believes the train companies benefit disproportionately from the fare-sharing arrangement and withdrawing from it could save £40m to £60m per annum. TfL chiefs also have concerns that paper Travelcards have a higher potential for fraud than Oyster or Contactless cards and a higher administration cost.

13.10.22 EVENING STANDARD – On Thursday morning three new escalators installed under the Bank Station Capacity Upgrade project were opened, making it easier to interchange between the Northern Line and DLR at Bank. Underground journeys hit 100 per cent of pre-pandemic levels last Sunday – while bus travel was at 100 per cent of “normal” last Saturday. Last Sunday there were 2.12m journeys on the Underground compared to 2.11m on a similar Sunday in October in 2019. Underground ridership at stations defined as ‘City’ stations – including Bank – is now at around 65 per cent of pre-pandemic levels, up from around 33 per cent in January. Weekend Underground ridership is now regularly above 85 per cent of pre-pandemic levels.

14.10.22 MAIL ON LINE – Evocative newly colourised images show 19th and 20th-century workers battling to build and extend London Underground tunnels, offering a glimpse into a different age. One of the oldest celebratory images show men working on the Central Line, dating from 1898. The Underground network has been open to the public since 1863 and was the world’s first underground railway. Another image captured shows the first section of the eastern extension of the Central Line from Liverpool Street to Stratford being officially opened by the Minister of Transport, Mr Alfred Barnes MP, on 3 December 1946. There is also an image from when The Right Honourable Sir Philip Lloyd Graeme opened the Hendon extension of the London Underground on November 19, 1923. These fascinating images were released by the TopFoto archive to show the men who built the amazing rail that one of the busiest cities in the world still relies on almost 160 years later. They also show the entrance to the underground in Trafalgar Square and the new colour brings the pictures to life, showing the textures and vibrancy of pedestrians’ clothing. The colourised images show the system’s first tunnels being built just below the ground, using the cut-and-cover method.

25.10.22 RAIL UK – The new Bond Street Elizabeth Line station opened yesterday morning (Monday 24 October). It takes its design inspiration from the surrounding urban realm, its historic buildings, art

galleries and the vibrant retail scene around the station and fits seamlessly within the heart of London's iconic West End. While the station shares a consistent look and feel on the platforms and cross-passage areas with other Elizabeth Line central stations, it is in the above ground areas that the design is really inspired by the local area. The station, designed by architects John McAslan + Partners, contains two brand new ticket halls at street level of significant and generous scale. Passengers entering the Davies Street entrance will notice the high ceilings while the other ticket hall at Hanover Square is flooded with natural light, and leads passengers down to the platforms, which are the longest platforms of all the newly built stations at 255 metres. Both entrances feature columns that blur the line between interior and exterior spaces and help the station fit into its surroundings with the choice of materials: red sandstone at Davies Street, and pale Portland stone at Hanover Square. Wide openings between the columns lead to clear, legible entrances. The unused spaces between columns are filled with glazed window panels and ventilation grilles framed in bronze. The beams of the coffered ceilings align with the lines of the columns, which open out to the new public spaces. Bronze panels add decorative detail above the escalators as well as providing acoustic absorption. The escalators at Hanover Square are the longest on the Elizabeth Line and the second longest on the entire TfL network, measuring 60 metres long. The new station contains three artworks by British artist Darren Almond: 'Horizon Line', 'Shadow Line' and 'Time Line'. The artworks resemble the embossed metal nameplates that were affixed to early British locomotives and were made by the same heritage sign company that made many of the boilerplates for locomotives of the past. 'Horizon Line' consists of 144 individual hand-polished tiles echoing paths of travellers as they descend underground whilst 'Shadow Line' and 'Time Line' are train boiler plates bearing poetic phrases 'REFLECT FROM YOUR SHADOW' and 'FROM UNDER THE GLACIER' respectively. The three abstract artworks will be found on the ceiling and around the western ticket hall of the Elizabeth Line station. Beside the Bond Street station entrance on Hanover Square is Medici Courtyard, which is the first public courtyard to open in Mayfair for more than a century. This area of public realm was transformed by Westminster City Council as part of the Elizabeth Line development in collaboration with adjacent property owners and developers, Great Portland Estates (GPE). Above each of the station entrances, new developments are also being built. At Hanover Square, GPE is also responsible for a new development of office and retail space designed by the architects Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands (LDS). Above the entrance at 65 Davies Street, Grosvenor is also constructing offices designed by PLP Architecture. Both developments will be key to supporting the London's growth and recovery with new jobs, homes and offices.