

FROM THE PAPERS

Items for "From the Papers" should be sent to Ian McKenzie at 24 Thamespoint, Fairways, Teddington, TW11 9PP (or E-Mail secretary@lurs.org.uk), and not to the Editor of this journal. Please ensure that contributions are identified by date and source publication.

AUTUMN 2017 CHORLEYWOOD MAGAZINE – You may have noticed that the wooden signal box at Chorleywood station is looking very smart again, having been painstakingly restored externally (see photo in *Underground News* for July 2017). The signal cabin (as LT called signal boxes) has been standing at the far south end of the northbound platform since the late 19th century and once played a major role in the transport system, although hasn't been used since the 1960s and the levers and equipment are long gone. We discovered some of its history – Frank Brown, who retired as Chorleywood station supervisor last year after 26 years, said: "When I started at Chorleywood in 1990 the box was only used for storage and equipment relating to the current system. In the old days it was all mechanical rods, and wires for pulling the semaphore signals up and down controlled with levers by the signalman. Chorleywood was of course busier then, the box stood at the throat of the freight yard (now the station car park). On leaving Platform 1 as you go down the steps, the cable-run bridge over the former freight yard track bed on the right is still in evidence". Chorleywood's signal box (a standard Metropolitan Railway No.1 box with 25 levers) became operational in 1889 when the line extension past Rickmansworth to Chesham opened. It was switched out overnight and switched back in again the following morning which wasn't unusual for quieter locations. Any overnight traffic was handled over longer sections by Rickmansworth and Chalfont signal boxes. Latter day Amersham signalman Don Grant started his signalling career as a teenage "box boy" at Chalfont & Latimer, qualifying as a signalman at Chorleywood in 1955. One duty on arrival for was lighting the station gas lamps (up a ladder with a box of matches) early mornings in pitch black and this always spooked him.

24.11.17 EVENING STANDARD – A man groped two women after repeatedly grabbing the bottom of a City worker, a court heard. The woman said she felt the defendant touch her as they stood next to each other on the busy rush hour Metropolitan line train. She texted friends to say: "I'm pretty sure someone is touching me on the train", as he repeatedly put his hand on her bottom, it was alleged. When the woman got out at Liverpool Street she said she found herself walking behind the defendant. "I saw him walking very closely behind a woman, and accidentally-on-purpose he tripped over to have hold of her by the waist", she told the court. "it seemed to me to be fairly orchestrated. He was trying to use his fingers to make contact with her bottom". She said she saw him again "flicking" towards a third woman's bottom as he left the station. "He was making the same motion several times over, but I don't believe it was a forceful enough to have had a significant effect or alert this woman to it". Describing her experience on 24 October last year, she said she initially thought the contact was accidental as they were "squashed" into the carriage but realised it was "intentional" when it happened several times. She took a picture of the man when she saw him trying to grab the third woman's bottom.

25.11.17 THE TIMES – Oxford Street was plunged into mass panic yesterday after false claims of a shooting during rush hour. Armed police flooded the shopping area – Oxford Circus station was evacuated and Bond Street station was closed. Although it later emerged that the mass evacuation has been caused by an "altercation" between two men on a platform, the panic was enough to cause injuries to those fleeing. One woman was seriously hurt in the crush, and another nine people were taken to hospital with minor injuries, while others were treated at the scene. Within an hour, however, and after a number of inaccurate accounts of the shooting, police confirmed that there had been no major incident. Scotland Yard said: "Police have not located any trace of any suspects, evidence of shots fired or casualties". Last night, BT Police said: "Officers believe an altercation erupted between two men on the platform". CCTV images of the men were released. BT and Met police warned people on Oxford and Regent Streets to stay in shops while officers assessed the scene. Scotland Yard said it responded to "numerous 999 calls reporting shots fired in a number of locations". An officer at the scene said that pedestrians were spooked when station announcements telling people to evacuate was played on the street and people started to run.

27.11.17 THE TIMES – Two men aged 21 and 40 who handed themselves in to police over an incident that caused the panic in London on Friday have been released without charge. An altercation prompted a mass evacuation of Oxford Circus station that spilt into the street. Nine people were injured.

28.11.17 EVENING STANDARD – (see 24.11.17 above) – An accountant has been cleared of groping a woman’s bottom during his morning commute to work at a city company. He was accused of repeatedly pushing the back of his hand up against one woman’s backside as they stood next to each other on a packed Metropolitan Line train. The woman, a city worker, told the Crown Court that she saw the man “flick” his hand at two more women’s backsides as he left the train at Liverpool Street station. However, the defendant told jurors he suffered from a foot problem that left him in considerable pain when standing up for long periods. He said he could not remember the alleged during events, on 24 October last year, but explained that he would clench his fists while travelling on the packed train to alleviate the pain. He added that he remembered falling into a woman at Liverpool Street station, but also blamed this incident on his foot condition. The defendant denied sexual assault and was cleared by the jury following a three-day trial.

28.11.17 EVENING STANDARD – *Letter by Sasha Simic* – “Had Oxford Circus station been adequately staffed, I don’t think a fight involving a handful of belligerent passengers who have been misinterpreted as a “terrorist” incident that led to a mass panic which paralysed central London on Friday. This is not a criticism of the staff of the Underground who did much to counter the growing panic. It is to say there should be more staff on every Underground station. Friday evening’s incident proves the RMT has been right to fight LU’s de-staffing policy. Every platform should be staffed. LU management must stop putting passengers at risk”.

30.11.17 EVENING STANDARD – *Letter by Lee Wootton* – “I must disagree with Sasha Simic’s assessment that a lack of staff at Oxford Circus station last Friday contributed to the mass panic. I pass through Oxford Circus every day during both the morning and evening rush hours and the platforms are always manned, as are those at every stop on the Victoria and Bakerloo lines. Does Ms. Simic also blame LU management for the large number of people who stampeded as fake news appeared on social media? This was a mass panic event exacerbated by misinformation on Twitter and Facebook. The incident should not be hijacked to advance a politically motivated anti-management agenda”.

01.12.17 EVENING STANDARD – *From Londoner’s Diary* – “Poor Ed Miliband – he just can’t seem to catch a break. On Wednesday at around 19.30, travellers on the Underground were treated to the sight of the former Labour leader running for the Northern Line train to High Barnet from Embankment. Miliband, with seconds to spare, took his chance and jumped between the closing doors And got stuck. Forcing the doors open, riders saw the hapless man who’d delayed their journey chuckle, looking sheepish”.

03.12.17 THE TIMES – *Letter by David Thompson* – “While one has to agree that warning signs, not only on the Underground but in general, are far too numerous and obvious, they are not there because TfL – or whoever – is overprotective of people. They are there because if they were not obvious and someone were to be injured for not doing the obvious, TfL would be held to blame for failure to give adequate warning, and face punitive damages. It isn’t the authorities that are responsible, it’s ambulance-chasing lawyers”.

05.12.17 THE TIMES – Police are looking for two youths after a teenager was attacked on an Underground train and forced to apologise for being gay. During the assault, on the Jubilee Line on 21 October, the 19-year-old man who was going to a fancy-dress event with friends, was put in a headlock and threatened with stabbing by two youths who boarded at West Ham. A woman aged 25 also suffered bruising.

06.12.17 METRO – Two 16-year-old boys have been arrested after a man was attacked on an Underground train and forced to apologise for being gay.

11.12.17 THE TIMES – *By columnist Matthew Syed* – “I have always admired the topology of the Underground map, but I had never seen the original until I happened to visit Finchley Central station last week. On the southbound platform is a poster with the first such map, designed by Harry Beck, a Finchley resident, in 1931. Beck, who worked as a draughtsman for the Underground, realised that the geographical map, with lines that veered here and there, was rather confusing. He therefore created a scheme that relied solely on straight lines and 45-degree diagonals, thus emphasising what mattered to commuters – the relative position of the stations, their connective relations, and the lines. It was an immediate hit. I will look at the Underground map with even greater admiration now I have familiarity with its history and originator. To my mind, there are few more elegant British design icons.”

12.12.17 – 18.12.2017 TIME OUT – The Piccadilly Line opened on 15 December 1906, serving 22 stations between Finsbury Park and Hammersmith. At first it was known as the Great Northern, Piccadilly & Brompton Railway. The line was extended northeast to Cockfosters and west to Uxbridge and Hounslow West in the 1930s, a time when a forward-looking government decided to spend its way out of a dramatic recession. The extension west to Heathrow Airport was not added until 1977, with Terminal 5 added in 2008. The line is one of the deepest in London, although of its 53 modern-day stations, only 25 are below ground.

12.12.17 – 18.12.17 TIME OUT – *By James Manning* – “London takes another leap towards 24-hour-city status this week, as the first all-night services start on the Overground. From Friday 15 December you’ll be able to ride the Ginger line (no, we don’t call it that either) from Dalston Junction all the way down to New Cross Gate, through some of the partiest bits of the city, every Friday and Saturday, all night long. Yes, it will fairly chaotic. No, you still won’t be able to get from Shoreditch to Peckham without a schlep or a night bus. Also, the 24-hour service won’t run to Highbury & Islington or stop at Whitechapel until next year. Not that we care – this is still huge news for anyone who likes having fun in London. Mark the occasion in style at *Libreria* in Spitalfields, possibly London’s coolest bookshop, which will be pulling an all-nighter on Saturday 16 December, with mince pies, booze and Christmas stories. Then it’s all aboard the party train”.

12.12.17 THE TIMES – *Letter by Edward Turner* – “Matthew Syed pays tribute to Harry Beck’s marvellous gift to the nation of his Underground map. Equal mention must be given to Edward Johnston, whose 1916 design of the distinctive typeface that bears his name was adopted first by the Underground Group and retained after merger with London Transport, even to this day. Similarly invaluable to all our daily lives is the creativity of Jock Kenneir and Margaret Calvert, whose work for the Worboys Committee in the 1960s gave our road signs their lasting legibility and familiarity, including the typefaces *Transport* and *Motorway*”.

12.12.17 EVENING STANDARD – *Letter by David O’Brien* – “Having experienced some of the worst travelling conditions in north London on Sunday, it’s easy to blame the weather when it is abundantly clear that London’s transport gurus are consistent in their continued failings. With large parts of the surface section of the Piccadilly Line inoperable, no local buses, no taxis, no local stopping services on the Great Northern line, how is this city supposed to function? If management could even to be bothered to respond professionally to the first snowfall of the season – we might have had half a chance but, being a Sunday, it was pushed to the sidelines. I don’t want to hear any more soundbites about London being “open for business”, being the “greatest city in the world” or any other clichéd nonsense when we so monumentally fail to keep our roads the rail systems in proper functioning order”.

13.12.17 THE TIMES – *Letter by Geoffrey Holliman* – “Although clearly very distinctive the *Johnston* typeface, which epitomises London Transport, is not as legible as the typeface designed by Kenneir and Calvert for motorway traffic signs. The subtle difference is that the latter uses both upper and lower case, thus giving “shape” to the wording and allowing those with dyslexia to read it far more easily.”

15.12.17 WATFORD OBSERVER – The Mayor of London’s team had a “productive” meeting with Watford Council over the future of the Metropolitan Line Extension (MLE). The Council welcomed Jules Piper and Fiona Fletcher-Smith to the town and they were given a tour of the borough and were shown the various schemes running in the town – including the MLE. TfL’s current estimates are that at least an additional £50M on top of the current total funding package of £284.4M would now be required to pay for the project. The Council has applied for the Government’s *Housing Infrastructure Fund* in a bid to get the project back up and running. The development has faced a lack of funding after Mayor Sadiq Khan dropped the project from his MLE proposals for a second time earlier this year. The Watford Mayor said: “The meeting went better than we dared hope. The MLE has been stuck on the side line and we are getting back on track. They were extremely impressed with the town’s plans and it was as though they came to check everything out just to see that what we had to offer was real. At our table were a lot of people who are Team Watford including Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise and major directors of the property developer INTU. A London mayoral spokesperson said: “While work remains to identify the remaining funding needed for the MLE, the Mayor and his team have had a number of productive meetings with the Council and local MPs, with a lot of agreement about how the project can proceed.”

21.12.17 THE TIMES – A man who was filmed jumping across an Underground line in front of a train has been condemned by TfL for risking the safety of passengers. The footage, filmed on the westbound

Central Line platforms at Stratford, was uploaded to Instagram. TfL said it was working with police to “ensure that action was taken”.

21.12.17 METRO – A year after the “Please Offer Me A Seat” scheme was announced, thousands of disabled passengers and those with invisible conditions have signed up. More than 26,000 people are now using their free badges and cards, which help them to get a seat on public transport. A survey of badge users carried out last month found more than 78% found it easier to get a seat as a result of the badge and 95% are likely to recommend the scheme to someone who needs it. The Deputy Mayor for Transport said: “I’m delighted the scheme has been a huge success so far. The badges are helping thousands of people get around our city more easily and comfortably, and raising awareness of the responsibility we all have to look out for people with hidden disabilities and conditions. In building a world-class transport system in London, it must be accessible for everyone, and on top of our record investment in step-free access, we continue to work to ensure “Please Offer Me A Seat” makes life better for everyone who needs it.” The badge and card can be used on all TfL services, as well as on station platforms, and in waiting areas. Note: Since their launch in London, “Please Offer Me A Seat” badges have been introduced on the New York subway and Greater Anglia trains.

22.12.17 EVENING STANDARD – After downing ten pints of beer at the darts, it probably seemed like a good idea. But Freddie Andrew’s decision to slide down an Underground escalator backfired in spectacular fashion. Dressed in football kit, the 22-year-old from Tunbridge Wells leapt on to the metal chute between two escalators as a prank. It quickly went wrong as he smashed his private parts into one of the emergency stop buttons – while his friends laughed hysterically. As he gathered pace, he slid another 40ft before hitting a metal sign and was catapulted headfirst into the opposite escalator, landing at the feet of a surprised passenger. The stunt at London Bridge station was filmed by one of his friends. The ASDA worker said he instantly regretted the stunt as he began sliding down, but was unable to stop himself. He said: “I was that drunk – I’d had about ten pints – the escalator was free and I went ‘why not?’. It was faster than I thought it would have been. But as I was sliding I couldn’t stop myself and had no choice. I did regret it”. He and his friends were on their way home from watching the World Darts Championships at Alexandra Palace. He said at the time he did not feel any pain because of how much he had had to drink. However, the next day, he was barely able to walk. The video of the stunt, which has gone viral, has been viewed online nearly 10M times. An LU spokesman said: “Safety is our top priority and pranks like this are dangerous for not only those involved but to other customers”.