



# Travel Topics

Issue 120

Autumn 2014

The watchdog for  
all Rail Travellers from Tonbridge,  
Paddock Wood and Hildenborough

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## Fare increases amid expected disruption

The annual fare increase will soon be here. The original announcement was that season tickets for 2015 would be raised by RPI+1% (i.e. 3.5%) but the Chancellor has now announced that the 1% additional increase will be waived. We are pleased that the arrangement which allowed a variation in rises by up to 5% has also been limited to 2%. It is to be hoped that SouthEastern will start to redress the inherent unfairness in season ticket fares whereby annual season tickets from Hastings to London cost £75 per mile, but from Tonbridge they cost £129 per mile.

In mid-October we learnt that Go-Ahead had been granted the Direct Award for the extension of the Integrated Kent Franchise, which will run until October 2018. While there have been some criticisms of this decision, we believe that the present management are in the best position

to cope with the extreme disruption that will be experienced during the major work to be carried out at London Bridge.

Meanwhile, the re-building of the low level station is nearly complete, and work on the high level will begin in January. For some 18 months, Charing Cross trains will not call at London Bridge; details of the changes as they affect trains from this area are given in our article inside.

We are aware that these new arrangements are very likely to have teething problems; electronic messages are welcome, but not everybody carries a laptop or smart-phone on the train. We are therefore pressing SouthEastern to ensure that information during disruption is communicated to platform staff and train drivers, and passed on to *all* passengers as quickly as possible.

**JR**

## Annual General Meeting

This year's AGM was held in the Council Chamber of Tonbridge Castle on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2014. The Guest of Honour was Sir John Stanley, whose was attending our AGM for the last time as MP for Tonbridge and Malling. Chairman Kathy Pratt outlined his interest in railway matters during the 40 years he had represented the area, and expressed her gratitude for the support he had offered to the work of the Association. Before asking Sir John to address the meeting she presented a scroll conferring him with Honorary Association membership. Sir John thanked the Committee for arranging the meeting for his convenience, and briefly outlined his recent efforts to improve the commuters' lot. He referred in passing to his opposition to the award of the Direct Franchise to SET, feeling that there should have been an element of competition, and to a couple of

issues with which he had recently been dealing. The first of these was the issue picked up by KCC that fares on SET were higher than on other SE commuter lines. The second was a case of a passenger who had been refused a second duplicate season ticket, and he was pursuing this with Government ministers, as it appeared to be enshrined in an Act of Parliament. He finished by thanking the Committee for the work they were doing for local travellers, which he demonstrated by comparing the service on the Tonbridge line with that through West Malling.

Chris Curtis from Network Rail had previously given an illustrated outline of the London Bridge works and Sarah Boundy, representing Southeastern, announced that Go-Ahead had recently been awarded the franchise for Southern and Thameslink.

**LS**

# Train service changes

In our last bulletins we have highlighted the disruption facing travellers during reconstruction of London Bridge station. This primarily involves the closure of various platforms, and between January 2015 and August 2016 all Charing Cross trains will run non-stop through the station. (In fact, between Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> and Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> December there will be 'dry runs' when all up trains to Charing Cross will not stop at London Bridge between 0754 and 0901.)

The overall picture is that since London Bridge will only be able to be reached by Cannon Street trains, at peak times these services are likely to be overcrowded. Apart from the lack of a London Bridge stop, most Charing Cross services are unaffected, but Cannon Street will be less accessible through being unable to be accessed via London Bridge.

Here is the **morning peak** service for our stations that will apply from Monday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2015:

**Tonbridge to Charing Cross:** Loss of 0550, 0711 and 0850; no other changes.

**Tonbridge to Cannon Street:** New through trains at 0540 and 0711, but loss of connections off Charing Cross trains.

**Tonbridge to London Bridge:** Only Cannon Street trains (some 50%). NB: this leaves only the 0644 between 0607 and 0711.

**Hildenborough to Charing Cross:** No change to peak trains, except 0715 will need a change at Sevenoaks. NB: Last through train is 0906.

**Hildenborough to Cannon Street:** Through trains only at 0603, 0715, 0740 and 0820. Connections at Sevenoaks off 0623, 0636, 0755 and 0840.

**Hildenborough to London Bridge:** Loss of most trains; only those to Cannon Street (see above)

**Paddock Wood to Charing Cross:** Loss of 0541 (catch 0531 and change at Tonbridge).

**Paddock Wood to Cannon Street:** New through train at 0531, but loss of connections at Tonbridge, except at 0632 and 0831.

**Paddock Wood to London Bridge:** 0541 advanced to 0531, change at Tonbridge on 0632, but loss of 0653, and connections off 0733, 0755 and 0814.

**Evening peak** trains are as follows:

**Charing Cross to Tonbridge:** Loss of 1600 and 1628 (diverted, see below), 1741 to become 1739.

**Charing Cross to Hildenborough:** Loss of 1600 and 1628 (catch 1615 and change at Sevenoaks).

**Charing Cross to Paddock Wood:** Minor timing changes only.

**Cannon Street to Tonbridge:** New through trains at 1603 and 1629, 1808 advanced to 1806.

**Cannon Street to Hildenborough:** New through trains at 1603 and 1629, but loss of 1702 (change at Sevenoaks), 1808 to 1806.

**Cannon Street to Paddock Wood:** 1808 as above.

**London Bridge to Tonbridge:** Only CS trains (LB depart 1607, 1633, 1706, 1728, 1749, 1810, 1836 and 1909).

**London Bridge to Hildenborough:** Loss of present 1753, 1815 and 1840, but connections at Sevenoaks off 1749 and 1836. 1812 to 1810.

**London Bridge to Paddock Wood:** Loss of 1619 and 1645, but connections at Tonbridge off 1607, 1633 and 1706. 1812 advanced to 1810.

At off-peak times two Charing Cross trains per hour will be diverted to Cannon Street and will serve London Bridge with an additional stop at New Cross. This daytime arrangement seems a reasonable compromise, though the reduced four trains per hour Charing Cross service will run at uneven intervals with gaps of 5 and 25 minutes. It also has the undesirable consequence that **Hildenborough** will lose all its off-peak trains to and from the **West End**; passengers will need to change at Sevenoaks to reach Waterloo or Charing Cross. **Paddock Wood** passengers will also need to change at Tonbridge to get to **London Bridge**.

Our greatest concern is for the late evening, when the present six trains per hour from Charing Cross to Orpington will be drastically reduced by the diversion to Cannon Street of the stopping trains. We have sought to ensure that the two remaining main line trains will be formed of at least 8 coaches, as boarding, particularly at Waterloo East, might be difficult. On Sundays until May all trains will be diverted to Cannon Street where we are assured the Underground station will open all day and later every evening until the last departures.

At the time of writing we understand that rail season and daily tickets will be able to be used **free** on specified T/L services as follows: between **London Bridge and Waterloo/Southwark** on the Jubilee line and bus routes RV1/381; between **London Bridge and Charing Cross** on the Jubilee/Bakerloo/Northern lines and bus routes 15/RV1; and between **London Bridge/Cannon Street and Charing Cross/Embankment** on the District/Circle lines and bus 15. However, there appears to be a lack of availability at intermediate stations, which we hope to get changed. **LS**

## How late is your train?

Have you ever wondered exactly how often your train is late, and how it compares to other trains you might catch? There is now a website *Recent Trains Times* which uses data from Network Rail to record train punctuality. From this we have compiled the table below which compares the punctuality of recent peak-hour trains from Paddock Wood (PW), Tonbridge (TON) and Hildenborough (HB). The figures show the percentage of times each train arrived within five minutes of their scheduled arrival time from 100 weekdays prior to 19<sup>th</sup> October 2014. The official definition of “on time” is used at Waterloo East for Charing Cross trains and London Bridge for Cannon Street trains. This is because padding in the timetable artificially inflates the percentage of “on time” arrivals at the terminal stations, making it better to choose an intermediate stop within London. (Asterisks (\*) indicate trains which run earlier during the leaf fall period.)

depart PW	dept TON	dept HB	% On time
0653*	<b>0702*</b>		<b>89</b>
	<b>0711</b>	0715	<b>89</b>
0707*	<b>0715</b>	0720	<b>97</b>
0714*	<b>0723*</b>		<b>98</b>
	<b>0731</b>	0735	<b>83</b>
0727*	<b>0735</b>	0740	<b>81</b>
0733*	<b>0742</b>		<b>87</b>
	<b>0751</b>	0755	<b>68</b>
0751*	<b>0759</b>		<b>62</b>
0755*	<b>0804</b>		<b>72</b>
	<b>0811</b>	0815	<b>67</b>
0807*	<b>0815</b>	0820	<b>81</b>
0814	<b>0822</b>		<b>84</b>
	<b>0835</b>	0839	<b>74</b>
0831	<b>0840</b>		<b>68</b>
	<b>0843</b>	0848	<b>82</b>
	<b>0850</b>		<b>70</b>

Studying these figures, it might be said that the (moderately) early bird catches the best train, as the 0723 appears to be the most consistently on time service in the morning rush hour, with the 0715 in a good second place. It appears that the 0723 arrived “on time” (that is, no more than 5 minutes late) on 98% of occasions within the period covered by the data, with the 0715 achieving this feat 97% the time. Conversely, the 0759 is most frequently late service, arriving “on time” only 62% of the time – in other words it is late on more than 1 in 3 occasions. Such poor performance also appears to affect the 0751, 0804 and 0811. Indeed, those using these “peak of the peak” services might persuade their bosses that their arrival would be more reliable if they travelled a little later, taking the 0815 or 0822 instead.

There appears to be little difference between the performance of trains on the Ashford and Tunbridge Wells lines. Each of our three local stations also has more or less its fair share of reliable and unreliable services, though Hildenborough has relatively few consistently on time trains in the later peak period. There also appears to be relatively little difference between Charing Cross and Cannon Street trains, though it will be interesting to see whether there is any change to this once the engineering works at the high level side of London Bridge get underway in January 2015.

Passengers who travel at other times of day, or who wish to check the punctuality of evening trains, may wish to visit the *Recent Trains Times* website for themselves. A link is available on our *Tonbridge Line Commuters* website, where we have included a news article on the websites and apps that are providing new ways for passengers to make informed decisions. The freeing up of this information is something we very much welcome.

JM

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## Tonbridge Line Commuters – Your Committee

We are pleased that the following were re-elected at this year’s AGM:

**Chairman:** Kathy Pratt  
96 Leigh Road, Hildenborough  
TN11 9AG Tel. 01732 838620

**Vice-Chairman:** John Reynolds  
14 Cumberland Court, Tonbridge  
TN10 3AL Tel. 01732 355871

**e-mail:**  
[enquiry@tonbridgecommuters.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@tonbridgecommuters.org.uk)

**Hon. Secretary and Acting Treasurer:** Lionel Shields  
13 Streamside, Tonbridge  
TN10 3PU Tel. 01732 355919

**Membership Secretary:** Steve Terry:  
6 Poppy Meadow, Paddock Wood  
TN12 6BN Tel: 01892 833880

**Public Relations Officer:** John Morton  
39 Rose Street, Tonbridge  
TN9 2BN + Tel: 01732  
359308

**Terry Hines**  
89 Hadlow Road, Tonbridge  
TN9 1QD Tel. 01732 351383

## End of an Era

The closure of the Arriva travel office on Tonbridge railway bridge at the end of September marks the end of an era for local bus users in Kent, as this is the last of the many offices that the bus company once operated in the county: Gillingham, Chatham, Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells. All are now gone, undoubtedly due to cost savings and the rise of the internet, but as a railway user group we know that to many bus users they represent the loss of a face to whom they can make a complaint, or a lost property or service enquiry. We are disappointed that Arriva seems to place so little value in the direct facility - while timetables are said to be made available in libraries and other

local offices, the staff there can only ever be just 'postmen', not answerable for the services themselves. Meanwhile, local bus information continues to deteriorate; the roadside maps in Tunbridge Wells are now over three years old, and times of buses, for instance between Tonbridge and the hospital, have suffered from KCC's meddling with the times of service 208. We recognise that bus services themselves operate at the mercy of road traffic conditions; the lack of any recognisable agency to whom bus queries can be addressed in cases of severe disruption is a sad loss to the community at large. **LS**

## Car parks

In May Tonbridge and Malling Council received confirmation from Southeastern that they intended to commence construction of their 182-space decked car park extension at the western end of their Vale Road car park in early July. Southeastern promised they would write to their car park permit holders and put signage up at the station to advise them of the works, which would last some 5 months, during which time 222 spaces would unfortunately be lost. The Council, who were only too aware of the problems this would cause car users, offered to assist SET, but this seems to have been declined.

However, work is proceeding apace, and we hope that the promised completion date of Christmas 2014 will be met.

Meanwhile, we are disappointed that the steps from the forecourt to the car park have been closed, we understand, for health and safety reasons, and the hole in the wall by the bus stops permanently blocked up. Off-peak users of the car park are the most affected, and now have to take a circuitous route via the bridge, or purchase a train ticket in advance. **LS**

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