



# Travel Topics

Issue 121

Spring 2015

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

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## Making the best of it

While the new timetable to accommodate the London Bridge redevelopment takes quite a bit of getting used to, and many travellers have found the changes required have lengthened overall journey time, the trains themselves seem to be running relatively smoothly. The complete chaos we feared for Southeastern passengers has largely been averted. Once travel patterns had settled Southeastern reviewed demand and passenger feedback, and from 8th March carriages were moved from lightly loaded services to overcrowded trains: 14 trains were lengthened and 7 have been given additional stops.

David Statham, Southeastern's Managing Director, has now given passengers an easy way to see how busy different services are at their station. He has produced records showing how busy peak train services are, and where seats are normally available along the route. The information relevant to our local stations is summarised in an article on the next page.

We have continued to seek improvements to the services offered. At the 4th March Southeastern Stakeholder forum TLC representative John Reynolds requested action to address the gaps in the morning peak service to Cannon Street, especially at smaller stations like Hildenborough, together with the provision of better passenger information at times of disruption. SET are checking if improvements can be made in the May timetable. Questions were also raised about platform overcrowding which will be addressed by more staff, and better information for technophobes. This is planned for June!

At peak times London Bridge station has seen some severe overcrowding, mostly impacting Southern trains, and some were unable to handle the volume of traffic so crowds backed up onto the concourse. There has also been a knock-on effect

at Cannon Street, Charing Cross and Waterloo East, the situation becoming so serious that Railway Management were summoned to Parliament. In response Network Rail and the train operators serving London Bridge have put in place a detailed action plan, including:

- An integrated 'one station team' comprising Network Rail, Southern and Southeastern staff working as a single organisation to manage issues better.
- Better advanced warning of potential problems at London Bridge.
- Travel advice on how to avoid London Bridge at times of disruption.
- Better access to the latest travel advice.
- Boosting wi-fi capability.
- Installing more information screens.
- Providing all staff with tablets.
- Increasing station staff numbers, particularly in peaks and during disruption.
- Re-introducing Olympic 2012 style 'travel champions' and 'customer action teams' to bolster station staffing levels and help people find their way.

Passengers altering their journey can use certain parts of the Transport for London (TfL) network at no extra cost. This applies to all ticket types: season tickets, day tickets, Oyster Pay As You Go, Contactless and Southern Smartcards (subject to restrictions on SET website). Specific London Underground stations are included, also some DLR stations and bus routes. We are pressing for tickets to be accepted on the tube at **Temple** and on the **Waterloo and City line** 'drain', but so far without success.

**Advance notice:** No Southeastern trains at London Bridge: Christmas Eve 2015 - 4th Jan 2016! **KP**

**Annual General Meeting – Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May at 19.30**

**will be held at the Forsyth Hall, Bradford Street, Tonbridge**

## What do the figures tell us?

The new timetable operating since 11th January has caused changes in travelling patterns and some trains have become very busy, while others are relatively quiet. To its credit, Southeastern has now published data showing how busy each train is and the number of carriages it conveys. A summary of the data for our local stations is given

below. Dark shading shows that standing room only is likely to be available when you board at that station, whereas lighter shading indicates that a limited number of seats may be available. If there is no shading then there should be sufficient seats for everybody.

### MORNING PEAK

<i>No of carriages</i>		8	12	10	8	8	12	11	10	12	11
<b>Paddock Wood</b>	d	06:32			06:53		07:08	07:14		07:27	07:33
<b>Tonbridge</b>	d	06:40	06:44	06:51	07:02	07:11	07:17	07:23	07:31	07:35	07:42
<b>Hildenborough</b>	d			06:55		07:15			07:35	07:40	
<b>London Bridge</b>	a		07:23			07:52	07:55			08:15	
<b>Cannon Street</b>	a		07:30			07:59	08:01			08:22	
<b>Waterloo East</b>	a	07:18		07:34	07:41			08:00	08:14		08:20
<b>Charing Cross</b>	a	07:25		07:40	07:47			08:06	08:20		08:26
<i>No of carriages</i>		12	11	8	12	8	8	8	8	8	8
<b>Paddock Wood</b>	d	07:50	07:55		08:07	08:14		08:31			09:03
<b>Tonbridge</b>	d	07:59	08:04	08:11	08:15	08:22	08:36	08:41	08:47	09:02	09:12
<b>Hildenborough</b>	d			08:15	08:20		08:40			09:06	
<b>London Bridge</b>	a	08:34			08:56				09:23		
<b>Cannon Street</b>	a	08:42			09:04				09:31		
<b>Waterloo East</b>	a		08:40	08:54		09:00	09:17	09:20		09:45	09:48
<b>Charing Cross</b>	a		08:46	09:00		09:07	09:23	09:28		09:51	09:54

### EVENING PEAK

<i>No of carriages</i>		8	8	8	6	8	8	8	12	8	11
<b>Charing Cross</b>	d		16:40	16:43	16:57		17:00	17:14		17:23	17:39
<b>Waterloo East</b>	d		16:43	16:46	17:00		17:03	17:17		17:26	17:42
<b>Cannon St.</b>	d	16:29				17:02			17:24		
<b>London Bridge</b>	d	16:33				17:06			17:28		
<b>Hildenborough</b>	a						17:43		18:01	18:05	
<b>Tonbridge</b>	a	17:13	17:21	17:24	17:36	17:40	17:48	17:54	18:05	18:09	18:20
<b>Paddock Wood</b>	a		17:28		17:45			18:03	18:13		18:29
<i>No of carriages</i>		12	8	11	12	8	8	12	8	12	8
<b>Charing Cross</b>	d		17:45	18:03		18:07	18:20		18:32	18:41	18:45
<b>Waterloo East</b>	d		17:48	18:06		18:10	18:24		18:35	18:44	18:48
<b>Cannon St.</b>	d	17:45			18:06			18:32			
<b>London Bridge</b>	d	17:49			18:10			18:36			
<b>Hildenborough</b>	a		18:27		18:44	18:49			19:12		
<b>Tonbridge</b>	a	18:24	18:31	18:42	18:48	18:54	19:01	19:09	19:17	19:25	19:29
<b>Paddock Wood</b>	a	18:33		18:51	18:56		19:10	19:18		19:33	

As shown in the tables, passengers from Paddock Wood, Tonbridge and Hildenborough can usually expect a seat when travelling to London in the morning. However, returning home is a very different story. From 5pm onwards every rush

hour train from London Bridge is liable to be full and standing. This is no doubt due to the substantial reduction in the number of trains serving London Bridge, and the fact that passengers are boarding at Cannon Street to secure

a seat and avoid the inconvenience of battling through London Bridge station during the engineering works. A number of fast trains also have few or no seats available at Waterloo East, but this has probably always been the case to some extent. It is understood that most slower trains from Charing Cross and Waterloo East (the ones that terminate at Tunbridge Wells) do have seats, though Southeastern has recently reduced the

number of carriages on some of these services (notably the 1723 from Charing Cross). We would be grateful to hear from any of our members who are able to comment on the accuracy of the data above. Are there any trains which are overcrowded but not shown as such in the table? Perhaps less likely, do any of the trains shown as busy in fact have spare seats? We would be interested to know. **JM**

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## Paddock Wood Update

The bridge and canopy replacement works that have been going on since January 2014 are finally more or less complete, with what looks like only a very few minor things left to do. The new bridge was brought into service, and the old one closed in Autumn 2014, but it took until January to get the lifts operational, this being very inconvenient for those less able to climb the increased number of stairs, as the new bridge is about 30% taller than the one it replaced. Apparently, during testing, one lift broke down and required replacement parts to be shipped in from abroad.

Initially, the lifts were only operational when the ticket office was open, and it is only a few weeks ago that the lifts were finally made a 24/7 operation, presumably because the emergency remote assistance service is now working. It is disappointing that relatively minor works have overrun so badly, since the initial time-scales published were predicting completion by Summer

2014. One can only assume that with the more major projects going on elsewhere on the network, that project management expertise was in short supply.

One of our TLC committee members will be representing the interests of rail passengers on the team developing a local plan for Paddock Wood, which is sponsored by the town council. Train capacity, access to and from the station and parking are going to become critical in the near future, as the town expands with up to 1,000 houses potentially to be built in the area over the next 10-15 years. It is fairly safe to say that the majority of these new households will have at least one member travelling regularly, and coupled with other house-building plans further down the line towards Ashford then the potential for overcrowding needs to be addressed as soon as possible. **ST**

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## Redhill Line news

Sadly, moves to reintroduce a regular through service between Tonbridge and Gatwick are unlikely to be progressed in the near future as Department for Transport criteria are too stringent. However, the service frequency between Redhill and Gatwick will be increased from December 2015, thereby improving connections to and from the Tonbridge Line. At the same time, the

services between Tonbridge and London Bridge via Redhill will be diverted to and from Victoria calling at Clapham Junction. This will offer a wide range of additional connections for West London and its suburbs, together with peak trains to and from an alternative London terminus. Tonbridge to London Bridge passengers would normally use the direct route via Sevenoaks anyway. **JR**

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# Tonbridge Line Commuters – Your Committee

the following are offering themselves for election 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

**Hon. Secretary:** John Morton  
39 Rose Street, Tonbridge  
TN9 2BN Tel: 01732 359308

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

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

## More spaces at Tonbridge Station Car Park

The new upper deck of the Tonbridge station car park was officially opened by the Mayor on 4<sup>th</sup> March. It can accommodate 172 cars and is already filling up. More people are travelling by train from Tonbridge and it is inevitable that some

will need to use their cars, especially from some of the outlying villages. The additional space is clearly an improvement but we will monitor car parking at Tonbridge and press for even more space when it becomes necessary. **JR**

## Have Your Say: Who needs Railway Insurance?

At the AGM there will be a proposal to terminate railway travel insurance for members when the current policy expires in early 2016. Why?

About 50 years ago, when the Association was newly-formed, it took out a policy to cover members against injury whilst travelling on the rail and tube network in the UK. This provided a lump sum of £5,000 in the event the member lost an arm, leg or an eye, or £10,000 in the event of death. In those days this was a significant sum of money, the sort of sum that could be used to buy a house. Over the years, the original policy has been renewed, but the values payable have been frozen, and in today's money the buying power of the policy is minimal. With a reduction in our membership, the cost per head has increased so it is now about £2 per member per year.

If we were to continue with the insurance next year we would need to increase subscriptions in 2016.

Considering the risks - the threats posed by terrorism have greatly increased. These are usually excluded in insurance policies, whilst the risks of injury from 'normal' railway accidents has diminished as the trains have been improved. The policy does not cover accidents on the roads which are far more likely, and in all the years we have had the policy we have never claimed on it. The committee now feel that the current policy is no longer fit for purpose. We believe that those who wish to be insured against a serious accident would be far better off taking out a policy that actually covers their personal/families' needs.

What do you think? Please vote at the AGM.

**KP**

## Chairman's note

Lionel Shields, who for the past 12 years has carried out the duties of secretary, has at last decided to rest his pen and concentrate on his sideline, the treasurership. We are grateful to

Lionel for his past efforts, and are pleased that John Morton, a hard-working member of our Committee, has agreed to take on the post of secretary as from the coming year. **KP**

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