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NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to the December Newsletter.

New Timetables

The new timetables begin on Sunday 15th December with minor changes only.

Christmas

There'll be no trains on Christmas Day. On Boxing day Chiltern will run a service between Marylebone and Oxford Parkway calling at principal stations.

There'll be a further blockade at Old Oak Common on 27th to 29th December, meaning no trains between Paddington and Ealing Broadway. Long distance trains will terminate at Reading or Euston, and the Elizabeth Line will operate between Ealing Broadway and Reading.

Down the Line

Maidenhead

The new lift and staircase to platforms 2 & 3 were duly opened on 6th September, so within Autumn as promised. Unfortunately a



few days later they were out of action due to the ingress of rain water.

Despite the signage there is no lift from the subway to platform 1.

The lack of proper pick-up / drop-off bays on the forecourt has been a problem since the forecourt was remodelled by the Royal Borough. We continue to press for a solution.

The gap between train and platform, particularly near the country end of platform 3 is a serious problem for anyone with impaired mobility. Along with other organisations we've raised this with Network Rail .

Furze Platt

We were very sad to hear of the passing of Furze Platt's ticket clerk, Janet Foote. She had been off work since the beginning of July and I'm sure customers at Furze Platt have missed her. GWR said they were training up a new ticket clerk to stand in for absentees but we have yet to see the results.

It has to be asked whether the ticket window will ever reopen as more and more customers are switching to contactless and electronic tickets.

Bourne End

Network Rail has informed us that the remaining bit of jointed track between Cookham and Bourne End will be replaced with continuously welded rail next April, which will require a blockade for 9 days.

Marlow

We are still looking for a volunteer to maintain the notice board and pick up any useful information. It will be useful if you can print to A4 in colour but we can send hard copy if necessary. Please let us know if you can help.



Elizabeth line		
Departures		
Destination	Plat	Expt
Heathrow T2,305	8	4 min
Shenfield	8	4 min
Heathrow T2,304	8	6 min
Abbey Wood	8	6 min
Shenfield	8	8 min
Abbey Wood	8	11 min
Shenfield	8	14 min
Reading	8	16 min
Abbey Wood	8	16 min
Shenfield	8	19 min
17:59:06		

Paddington
We've been campaigning to have Elizabeth Line platform A & B departures shown in the main line station. Well done Network Rail!

Timekeeping has improved too, probably because, with more routes to play with, Carousel can allow more recovery time at termini.

We have a Sunday service at last. Due to route variations in the Loudwater / Flackwell Heath area the buses run as 37 on weekdays, 37A on Saturday and 37B on Sunday.

Special times will apply from 24 December to 2nd January. Leaflets are available on buses.

Last Buses - December 24 & 31

36: 1850 from HW, 1930 from Bourne End

37: 1820 from HW to Maidenhead

37A: 1935 from Maidenhead to HW

HW = High Wycombe Bus Station.

New Marlow Branch Video



There's a new video ³ of the branch by well-known rail vlogger Geoff Marshall with special guest Mark Hopwood CBE.

As well as a bit of the branch's history, you'll get a good idea of how it operates, including the 19th C original GWR token and staff machines for single line working.

And by the way, Mark would like the brass plate off the Marlow - Bourne End staff back. It was apparently nicked when we had an outside ground frame.

Remember "A for Abbey, B for Berks".

New Elizabeth Line Operator

GTS Rail Operations Limited has announced the new operator for the Elizabeth Line.

GTSROL is a joint venture between Go Ahead Group, Tokyo Metro and Sumitomo Corporation. It will take over from MTR Corp. (Crossrail) Ltd. in May 2025 ¹.

Elizabeth Line 4G Complete

Mobile coverage on the Elizabeth line complete ahead of festive season

TfL and Boldyn Networks have finished work to bring mobile coverage to the entire Elizabeth line, including tunnelled sections in between stations ².

On the Buses

The changeover from Arriva to Carousel went very smoothly. At first, Carousel ran whatever buses they could scrape up, but we now have a smart fleet of refurbished Volvo / WrightBus single deckers. They look new but were in fact delivered to First Glasgow in 2011 hence the '61' registrations. Carousel acquired them from *Explore Dundee*. Thanks to Ian Rivett and others on *Londons Transport* for the information.

1. <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2024/november/gts-rail-operations-limited-announced-as-new-operator-for-the-elizabeth-line>

2. <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2024/december/mobile-coverage-on-the-elizabeth-line-complete-ahead-of-festive-season>

3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWf8LkRtgX0>

Chiltern Refurbishing 168 Fleet



The first of Chiltern's refurbished Class 168 trains was unveiled on 9th October. The event took place with a flourish at Marylebone Station Platform 1.

A string trio of pretty young ladies played. There were speeches from Chiltern's MD, Richard Allan, Fleet Manager, and representatives of the contractors.

The train was resplendent in its new dark blue and grey livery, and very clean and shiny. These trains have already covered a distance equal to the moon and back four times and are over 20 years old. The main features are a more or less complete replacement of moving parts and, internally, new seats, albeit in the original shells, together with re-furbished toilets, lights and aircon. Most seats have a charging point with 13A, USB-A and USB-C sockets.

Detailed inspection was very positive, I found the new seat squabs comfortable with much more lumbar support. A new area is created for large pieces of luggage, to complement the overhead space. The lighting was bright, and the temperature comfortable. The Wi-Fi



locked up straight away.

There was a choice of toilets, disabled access and normal. The normal, not large but everything worked. The hot air hand dryers were more powerful than the rather weedy ones we have become used to. The only fault I could find here is the little hand basin will be difficult to clean, as it isn't possible to avoid flooding the top.

The PA was loud and clear, and no great change to the displays. There are four waste bins in each entry lobby labelled for rubbish or recycling,



One major flaw is the disabled access. Because tip-up seats are provided for when there are no wheelchairs, tables have also been added. These unfortunately restrict the wheelchair access so it is only possible to manoeuvre a standard wheel chair directly into place across the axis of the train. A many point turn is required to position it normally.

The trains are owned by Porterbrook, and leased to Chiltern. The project was a three-way co-operation between Abellio traincare, Porterbrook and Chiltern. Interesting to note: there is no branding inside, only vinyls on the outside. An easy route to a Great British Railways re-brand perhaps?

At the end the train formed the 1136 to Birmingham Snow Hill, and set off filled with real fare paying passengers who were reminded that this was a newly refurbished train! The journey went well, fairly quiet for a DMU, with High Wycombe reached in just over 20 minutes.

Nigel Phillips, photos: Rail Business UK.

