

New tube station manager wants to make connections

By David Gritten

It's been at least 25 years since people routinely referred to the Northern line as "the misery line"; since then it has improved out of all recognition. There's an extraordinary number of passengers to keep satisfied: the most recent statistics, for the whole of 2017, show that passengers entered or exited East Finchley 7.31 million times.

That requires a huge amount of work behind the scenes to ensure everyone's safety and maintain the reliability of the service. For the past six months, Stephen Read, a 22-year veteran with London Underground, has been the man responsible for running East Finchley station.

Managing station and depot

His job is to ensure that for passengers everything is as it should be. "Even if someone has merely spilled their coffee on the floor," he says, "it gets cleaned up as soon as possible. We don't want people slipping, falling and injuring themselves."

Stephen's title is Train Operations Manager (a TOM, as it is known within the company). Because East Finchley is a depot as well as a station, he has a team of 100 drivers who start their day there and who report to him.

Keeping track of the track

In his new post he is also the 'landlord' for the Northern line between East Finchley and Kennington, on the Bank branch. He says: "My responsibility is to the track, so we've got engineers out there, checking it constantly."

"My team of train managers has to plan general inspections, which involves having to walk the track all the way down to Kennington. At the end of the day, my job is to ensure the railway is safe for everyone."

Connecting with the community

A large part of Stephen's



On the front line: Train operations manager Stephen Read at East Finchley station. Photo Mike Coles.

career with London Underground has been customer service, which has long filled him with enthusiasm. "When I was Area Manager at Angel, I built close relationships with the local community," he recalls. "These included the police, business partnership teams and local schools and colleges."

Now he intends to pursue

a similar course in his new job: "I'm keen to work with any business groups, neighbourhood watch groups, or any organisation that has a part to play in East Finchley." Stephen would be happy to explain the work of running a busy Tube station, and to listen to comments from locals about it.

Northern line on track for four days of disruption

By Diana Cormack

Tube travellers and residents living close to East Finchley station face four days of disruption and disturbance over the Easter holiday weekend while track replacement work is carried out.

Residents living close to the Northern line have been informed by London Underground that round-the-clock work will take place between East Finchley and Highgate stations from 10pm on Thursday 9 April to 4am on Tuesday 14 April.

The Transport for London website says there will be no Tube service north of Archway on the Friday and Monday of the Easter weekend, and no service on the High Barnet branch north of Camden Town on the Saturday and Sunday. Notification

on replacement buses will be displayed nearer the time.

The track will be renewed by new-for-old replacement of the existing rails, sleepers and ballast. A tamper, road/rail excavators, a breaker and various hand tools will be used throughout the continuous process. In preparation a satellite depot will be set up in East Finchley Station car park on Saturday 4 April, remaining until Thursday 16 April.

Car park changes

It is expected that, when the main works begin on 9

April, increased activity will be noticeable in and around the site access point at East Finchley station. The station car park will be used for staff parking as well as for staff welfare and essential vehicles. Track machines will be brought down the line from an access point at Finchley Central station.

London Underground say in their letter to local residents that, although some noise and increased traffic in the area will be unavoidable during the works, they will try their best to limit any disturbance.

RICKY SAVAGE ...

"The voice of social irresponsibility"

Don't panic!

In the past few weeks of panic buying and self-isolation, we've all had to get used to the spirit of the Blitz. The virus spreads in six stages, they say, so the only thing to do is keep calm and take inspiration from *Dad's Army*.

Let's start with stage one, and good old Sergeant Wilson, an impeccably polite gentleman who could be pretty relaxed about life even when the world was going mad. No hoarding supplies for him, except perhaps an extra bottle of claret.

Moving on to stage two, the pompous voice of Captain Mainwaring creeps in. Naturally he'd have been prepared and would have filled his air raid shelter with enough loo rolls and tinned soup to last a year, if he hadn't been stopped by rationing. He might have called Private Pike a "stupid boy" but he was no genius himself.

And of course Pike himself is stage three. Who else would be wearing an extra scarf (and a face mask) in high summer because his mum told him to?

In the weird world of Walmington on Sea, stage four has to be Private Walker. Today he'd be offering to sell the rest of the platoon bottles of hand sanitiser he'd picked up from a reliable source. And no they wouldn't be cheap; I mean, you can't get the stock these days.

Now things start to get a bit more serious as for stage five we have to turn to the dour Scottish undertaker Private Fraser. In the darkness of his funeral parlour he gets down the reality of it all in the way that only he can. Yes, "We're all doomed, doomed."

But, don't worry, salvation is at hand, not in the form of a vaccine or Walker's dodgy supplies but, as we finally get to stage six, in the reassuring shape of Corporal Jones. With his memories of fighting in the Sudan and his daily struggle to keep customers in his butcher's shop satisfied, he is the voice of reason when he tells us all, "Don't panic, don't panic."

So as you think about buying that 24 pack of toilet rolls to add to the 96 you've already got stuffed in the garage, don't do it. Think of others and remember: it was our wartime spirit that got us through the worst once and it will do so again this time.



'Good food fans: Diners tucking in at Dan & DeCarlo

Supper club keeps café cooking after hours

By Ann Bronkhorst

When his busy local café closed each evening the owner, Mikki Bartell, wondered how the premises might stay lively and bright for a few more hours. He found the answer online: Viola Slodzinska, a talented local cook with experience of home-based supper clubs, and they agreed on a joint venture.

The outcome was a small, friendly supper club with a Valentine's day theme held at Dan & DeCarlo's on the High Road, N2, with 15% of the profits going to East Finchley Festival. The diners were strangers to each other before the meal but quickly relaxed, exploring a menu that included Viola's popular Polish dumplings as well as more unusual choices such as chestnut soup and dragon fruit sorbet.

Mikki, too, enjoyed the transformation of his café. "It all looked so different, with the lights, Viola's table decorations and the dark outside. For me, it was a nice change to stand back and watch."

Viola is planning her next supper club at Dan & DeCarlo's for later this year when the focus will be on her home region of Lower Silesia, for centuries a melting pot of cultures and traditions. Foodies can spot the Czech, Jewish and Bosnian influences as well as recipes from Austria and Germany. There will be details at Dan & DeCarlo and at www.facebook.com/violasfood