



Test trains have been running from Mondays to Fridays only (unfortunately) on a "one engine in steam" basis (what quaint terminology in this day and age) to ensure that all systems operate effectively. In January the railway will be handed over to Transport for London (TfL) for testing under full operational conditions. Opening to the public of the full Dalston Junction to Crystal Palace / West Croydon service is pencilled in for April.

Lunch had been arranged as before at the Geffrye Museum on Kingsland Road.

And so to Shoreditch where the advances made in two years really hit home. No more did we have to imagine the bowstring bridge over Shoreditch High Street - it was there for us to see - along with the site of Shoreditch station, enclosed in a concrete tube (a crash deck) to protect both it and service trains from the development that is proposed to go on around it. Members were also introduced to the infamous bridge G19 that slipped off its supports the previous Christmas and caused such disruption to services in and out of Liverpool Street. Apparently it wouldn't have been so had it not been on a 1:28 gradient down to Whitechapel Station.



At Shoreditch it became apparent just how long this project had been in gestation and just how rewarding forward thinking can be, something not normally associated with government, local or national. When the line closed in

1986 it was left to become derelict and overgrown. Three years later in 1989 some bright spark decided that it might be a good idea to protect the land from development in case of future needs. How prescient! Twenty years later a new line is being built.

Thus to the final stage of the tour - but first we had to get to London Bridge. Boarding a 48 bus we set off along Bishopsgate through the City where, to the amusement of some, we passed a rather prestigious building proudly labelled "RSA". At London Bridge members were given a choice of trains; catch the 13.35 to New Cross Gate where we could alight and see the works being carried out there or wait until 13.54 and catch a direct train to Crystal Palace. No one opted for the latter option such that there was a dash to platform 11 where everyone leapt on the New Cross Gate train with seconds to spare before the doors closed.

Unlike the first tour, when it was dark before we arrived at New Cross Gate, the full extent of the work undertaken was obvious. New Cross Gate is the limit of the new construction being undertaken by Balfour Beatty Carillion Joint Venture and it is here that a new flyover has been constructed and platform works carried out. Finally we set off for the last leg of the tour to Crystal Palace where, along with West Croydon, the new service will terminate. As with New Cross Gate, we were able to view these works in the daylight although Roger had to compete with a cement mixer in use by the orange high-vis brigade (Roger lost). And, as with the first tour, Nigel Harris of the Railway Consultancy was there to greet us and give us access to the splendid entrance hall. Not currently in use other than for pop concerts, this is due to be recommissioned as part of the ELLX works at which time the 1970s "carbuncle" that presently masquerades as a ticket office is due to be demolished. The ticket office inside the original entrance hall is surplus to requirements and is being offered free to any preserved railway that can accommodate such a substantial edifice (buyer collects, presumably).

And so another well-organised, informative and entertaining ELLX study tour drew to a close which left just enough time for the majority of members to make the final dash of the day to catch the 15.57 to Victoria. Never have RSA study tour members been subjected to so much exercise! As always, thanks must go to Roger for his wonderful organisation without whose efforts the RSA would be so much the poorer. Well done, Roger.

*Chris Turnbull*