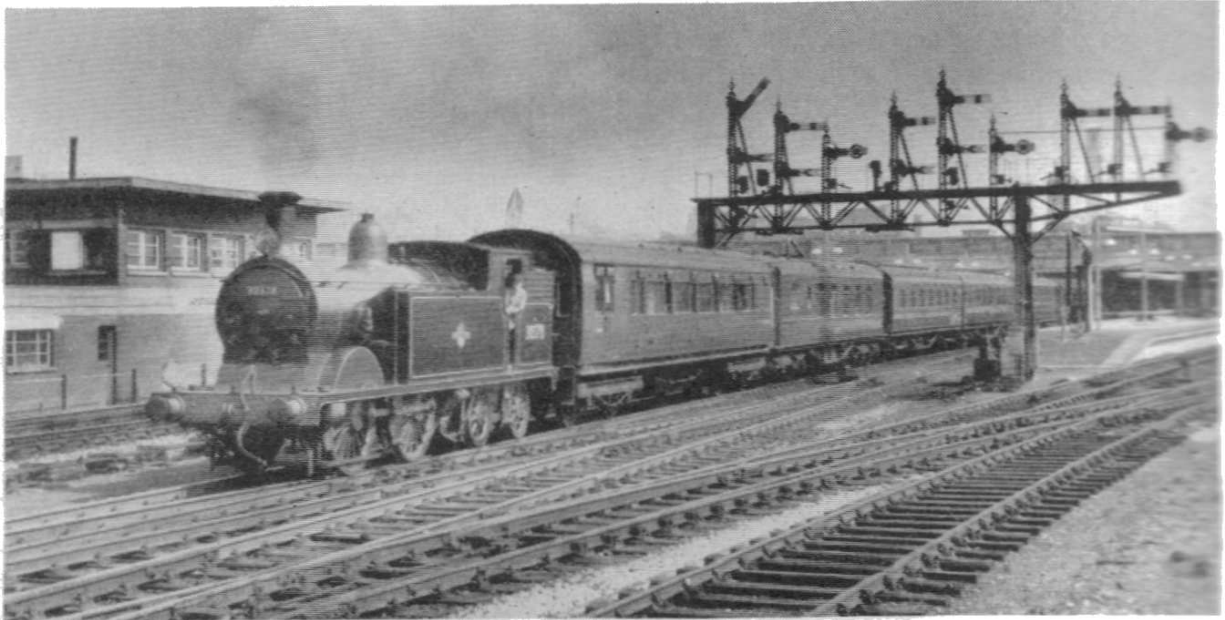


Coaching Stock Management

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Photo]

[Derek Cross

Portion of a Southampton boat train being worked through Southampton Central Station to the west docks by "M7" class 0-4-4 tank engine No. 30378

THE control and distribution of coaching rolling stock is a highly specialised job, and the work in connection with it is performed in rolling stock offices by selected personnel. The economic use of the stock to meet the requirements of the basic timetable is planned through the medium of the carriage working notices, which are distributed to all parts of the system.

The day-to-day disposition of the rolling stock in my Region—the Southern—is obtained from the daily coaching stock return rendered by stations. These returns are compiled on the spot in yards and sidings by local inspectors or foremen, and despatched as directed to the appropriate rolling stock offices. The returns show stock on hand at start of work (required and spare), wanted additionally for future use, and sent away since the last report. These forms are printed on orange-colour paper to facilitate sorting.

The main basis for the control and distribution of locomotive-hauled rolling stock is the permanent formation of a number of vehicles—varying with the type of service for which they are used—into set trains; these are, however,

supplemented (where necessary) by "loose" vehicles. Certain types of vehicles have always to be controlled individually, such as Pullman and refreshment cars, and Post Office carriages.

Electric multiple-unit stock is interchangeable within the limits of the requirements of each particular route. Services are normally worked by stock designed for a particular purpose, that is for suburban, outer suburban or main line, and between these types there are big differences in layout of seating and some variation in performance. Exigencies of peak traffic, and the multifarious incidents which inevitably arise in the running of about 7,000 passenger trains each day, mean that stock has quite frequently to be switched quickly between the various routes, and it follows that improvisation is much less likely to inconvenience passengers when units are interchangeable.

At the stations and depots, the staffs of the Mechanical & Electrical Engineer and the Operating and Refreshment departments are familiar with the day-to-day movements of stock and they work in close touch with the passenger rolling stock staff. Carriage workings for stations

at which trains start or terminate, and covering all trains (steam and electric) in the timetable, are issued. A balance of units, set trains and loose vehicles is maintained; each station or yard finish overnight with sufficient stock for the next morning's use and local staff are alert in ensuring that the balance is effected daily.

Special traffic arrangements constitute another complex aspect of rolling stock

The system of balanced stock working embraces regular patterns of movement which take advantage of the fixed formations of multiple units and set trains predominantly used, particularly in the suburban area. These patterns simplify the task of familiarising local staff and others concerned with rolling stock requirements and distribution, although the patterns themselves are, and indeed have to be, extremely complex to



Kent Coast train of multiple-unit electric sets near Meopham

management. These consist of relief, excursion, party, ocean liner and Continental boat trains, to quote but a few, all of which require expert attention to ensure that special requirements, such as seating, refreshment facilities and van accommodation, are provided for. Non-passenger carrying vehicles such as parcels vans, horseboxes, cattle vans and motor car vans also are controlled through the medium of the coaching stock report, broadly in the same manner as coaches.

This, then, is the machinery for control and adjustment of the daily stock working, and is a part only of the whole system of planning designed to ensure economic coverage of the Southern Region's regular intensive train service by obtaining the maximum use and availability of train crews and locomotives, servicing and examining staff, as well as of the passenger rolling stock.

ensure efficient coverage of the peak travel periods. Here, for example, is a typical day's work for an electric suburban set:

Time	From	To
5.45 a.m.	Swanley	Holborn Viaduct
6.34 a.m.	Holborn Viaduct	West Croydon
7.40 a.m.	West Croydon	Victoria
8.18 a.m.	Victoria	Epsom Downs
9.09 a.m.	Epsom Downs	Victoria
10.00 a.m.	Victoria	West Croydon
10.34 a.m.	West Croydon	Holborn Viaduct
12.10 p.m.	Holborn Viaduct	West Croydon
1.25 p.m.	West Croydon	Victoria
2.10 p.m.	Victoria	West Croydon
2.43 p.m.	West Croydon	Holborn Viaduct
3.51 p.m.	Holborn Viaduct	Sevenoaks
5.02 p.m.	Sevenoaks	Holborn Viaduct
6.14 p.m.	Holborn Viaduct	West Croydon
7.25 p.m.	West Croydon	Victoria
8.10 p.m.	Victoria	West Croydon
8.44 p.m.	West Croydon	Holborn Viaduct
10.10 p.m.	Holborn Viaduct	West Croydon
11.14 p.m.	West Croydon	Crystal Palace

This unit interchanges with others of the same type, finishing at Swanley and Crystal Palace on alternate nights, and starting from those stations the next day.

To suggest that with a planned pattern such as this there is little need for careful daily control, however, is to oversimplify greatly. Apart from seasonal changes in requirements and peaks in non-business travel such as bank holidays, there are always other factors, usually unpredictable, which require that the general arrangements be modified quickly. Among those that spring to mind at once are interferences of services by adverse weather conditions, or extensive malicious damage to a vehicle and the like, all of which will disturb the normal disposition of rolling stock. It is here that alternative arrangements must be made at once—sometimes on a very large scale indeed—and close co-operation is maintained between station, Train Super-

vision Office and the Passenger Rolling Stock Officer in the working of the rolling stock and in the day-to-day balance.

Intelligent anticipation can often make the task easier and ensure its more efficient performance—an eye on the weather, for instance, is an obvious help. Efficient use and servicing of passenger rolling stock is a vital factor in railway economics. The cost of constructing, maintaining and servicing passenger carriages accounts for a big proportion of our budget, and experience on the Southern Region has shown that, with careful planning, conscientious surveillance of the day-to-day position, and a very flexible approach, it is possible to keep the number of these increasingly expensive vehicles to the minimum.