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## **FACILITY DRILL**

### **Blog - 2017 - January**

#### **Train Journey**

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PDF Date: 15 December 2024

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

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Handwritten musical notation on a five-line staff, featuring various notes, rests, and accidentals.

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1. 7. 2023

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## Train Journey

Let me tell you about today's railway train journey, which will provide an opportunity to practise some railway and travel vocabulary. I arrived at the train station in good time for my travel plan. I walked past the waiting room and ticket office, and out onto the bridge. I touched my card on the reader (this is called touching in and touching out), listening for the bleeping sound and seeing the indicator light changing from orange to green, which shows that it has been accepted. I descended the steel staircase carefully holding on to the handrail. It is not a good idea to put the card away whilst going down the steps! I walked along the platform past the coffee and snack vendor's hut and the other travellers and commuters waiting for their trains. I went further along the platform as far as the last shelter, so that I would be about level with the end carriage, which is usually less crowded than the others. At last I saw the train's bright white headlights approaching out of the mist in the distance. The announcer informed us that certain trains had been delayed by several minutes, but I am glad to say that mine arrived on time.

In our trains the seats are mostly in pairs, with two or three seats facing another two or three. I found some newspapers on the seat and put them in the luggage rack out of the way. I sat by the window and then I heard the rapid bleeping sound which indicates that the automatic doors are about to close. In busy stations some people still try and dive onto the train at this point, but this is not a safe thing to do at all. The scrolling LED display board on the ceiling welcomed me to the south-eastern service and gave the final destination, as well as listing all the stations at which the train would be calling. Sometimes the driver or guard also makes an announcement, such as an apology for the late running, or information on where people need to change trains, if they have other destinations in mind. Each station is announced with the words "We shall shortly be arriving at" and then a

different voice says "Please mind the gap between the train and the platform edge." On curved platforms and at older stations, this gap can be quite considerable, both in width and height.

I watched the scenery whizzing past, mostly trees, grass and weedy verges. All the plant growth is cut back at intervals and one sometimes sees gangs of men in high vis jackets working by the trackside to remove all the vegetation within a set distance of the tracks. The fast-spreading buddleia shrub can be seen everywhere, as its seed is dust-like and prolific, being drawn along the tracks in the turbulence created by the passing trains. It grows in every tiny crack in concrete and brickwork, and can soon demolish any structure, including brick railway bridges, if not removed. I saw the back yards and car parks of various factories and warehouses, and all the back gardens, from the very untidy and messy, to the neat and well cared-for ones. Many of them seem to have the same notion that the end of their garden is a convenient place to dump their stuff, away from the house. I often wonder whether those living there get used to the sound of the trains and no longer hear it, or whether they consider it preferable to being overlooked by more houses and buildings, or near heavy traffic.

I noticed all the trackside equipment, without having any idea of what they were for, metal boxes of various shapes and sizes, cables snaking along on their brackets, and large wide overhead gantries. On some routes my train passes the huge sheds where the rolling stock is kept and maintained. I mentally frown at the defacing graffiti on railway property and even on some of the houses alongside if they are very close, and wonder how the perpetrators would react if they came home to find a stranger had done the same to their furniture, car or prized possessions. Apart from the defacement and the trespassing, they are risking their lives and those of the train passengers as they climb about by the tracks.

## Train Journey

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I recognised the carriage wash, a wide arched structure several metres long containing rows of revolving brushes, an oversize version of a car wash, although I have never seen it in use. Sometimes I see a fox settling down under the trees, or crows and magpies looking for insects amongst the overgrown disused tracks and sidings. There always seems to be piles of gravel and granite chippings, bricks, broken concrete, lengths of rusted rail track or bundles of wires scattered about. Maybe this is the archaeology of the future, scraps of items left over, that get buried with the next phase of building work and remain hidden for years, long after everything else has been recycled and reused.

I arrived at the mainline station and listened to the announcement telling me that "This train terminates here" and reminding the passengers to ensure they take all their personal belongings with them when they leave the train. I stepped down onto the platform and joined the crowd of passengers queuing at the exit barrier gates. The main concourse is a very large open space, full of people either standing and staring at the destination boards on high, waiting to see which platform their train will be leaving from, or walking in all directions and miraculously not bumping into each

other. I went down the escalator, touched my card on the reader again and took the underground train to my destination in the far south west of London. After leaving the city centre and travelling through the suburbs, most of my journey took me through the countryside, bare for winter but still much more pleasant than the barren looking cityscape.

The end of the line was a small country station where time seemed to have stood still. The old signal box was still there as well as the brick water tower from the days of steam. The old-fashioned waiting room was clean and bright but untouched by modernisation. It was filled with pictures of the history of the station and area, along with many certificates for prize-winning station floral displays over the years. One photograph showed a steam train standing in the station in 1889. I was pleased to see that the platform seats were big sturdy old wooden benches, comfortable and warm to sit on. Most stations have small cold metal seats, and on a chilly day it is sometimes preferable to stand, or find some spare free newspapers to place on the seat.

On my return journey to the city, I felt as if I was going "back to the future". I travelled on the underground system once again, some of which is in the open as it goes through the outer countryside areas, and mostly in tunnels in the city. I rode up and down the escalators and marched along tiled passenger walkways to find the correct platform. Everyone had to walk up the last escalator as there had been a power failure with the equipment. By now the place was filling up fast with the rush hour crowds. When the destination board changes for a particular platform, meaning that that train has arrived, a chunk of the crowd standing there suddenly breaks away from the rest and they all stream towards the gate for that platform. I like to stand close to the gates whilst still in view of the boards, in order to avoid that initial crush and get through quickly.

## Train Journey

The mainline train that I thought I had missed was actually delayed, and so I boarded that one very quickly. I was relieved not to have to wait another half an hour with the other travellers on the concourse, which could only get worse as rush hour approached. It was a fast train going to my home town in the south-eastern suburbs. The word fast means that it would not be stopping at the intervening stations, as well as the fact that its speed is generally, but not always, higher than the normal trains that do stop at every station. Five minutes into the journey the inspector came down the aisle. He asked to see everyone's card or ticket, and politely thanked them as he approved each one. Inspectors often choose fast trains for their work because there is no opportunity for fare dodgers to leave the train at the next stop to avoid getting caught.

I got off the train at the large station that serves our town, and had to catch another train to go back one station. The information board display indicated that it would arrive in four minutes, this went down to two minutes, and then back up to four minutes again. I am glad to say that it finally arrived, the lighted carriages looking very welcoming as the daylight had now faded. The return journey was very short and within a few minutes I was back at the exact place where I had started. The ding of the bell meant that the train door could now be opened. I stepped out, ascended the stairs, descended them on the other side and took the bus home. All in all a good day's travelling on our modern version of the iron horse, or at least in one of the carriages behind it. (1603 words)