

Barry Doe



Britain's leading fares and service expert

The Fare Dealer

Why pay London Midland's peak fares?

IN a recent Fare Dealer (RAIL 637) I referred to London Midland's new restrictions on Off-Peak fares out of Euston in the evening peak. A more in-depth study shows it is anything but simple, and that nobody actually need pay these fares.

LM says that OP Returns to London and OP Day Travelcards are not valid out of Euston between 1645 and 1845 Mon-Fri. But in RAIL 638's Fare Dealer I reminded readers that a Travelcard has no evening restriction within Greater London. So an OP Travelcard from Tring, for example, would remain valid on the 1714 from Euston to Harrow & Wealdstone.

It transpires that the restriction on OP fares applies literally only to Euston. Tring to Harrow & Wealdstone would not be affected, and LM has confirmed that this means if you have an OP Day Travelcard you may use it any time Euston-Harrow and then Harrow-Tring.

In other words, you can use it anytime from Euston to Tring provided the train stops at Harrow (or any other station with Zones 1-6).

So what of OP Day Returns? Say you live at Northampton and buy an OP Day Return to London. That's £22.90, but because you want to come back around 1730 the clerk says you have to buy an Anytime Day Return at £46.80.

No you don't. Buy an OP Day Return ticket to somewhere else via London - anywhere else. Northampton to Clapham Junction, for example, is £28.10 and you return when you like from Euston.



Not only do you save a lot of money but you get two Zone 1 cross-London fares for free! They'll also allow you to alight Oxford Circus, or wherever, although the gates will then retain your outward ticket.

And if you don't want the free Tube, try Northampton-Willesden Junction via London, which has an OP Day Return

for only £25.10.

The same applies if you're staying overnight and want an OP Monthly Return. If you intend returning 1645-1845 you'll be told that you can't use the OP (Saver) Return (£27.80) but that you have to buy singles each way as there's no Anytime Return other than for a day,

London Midland 321415 speeds through Church Brampton on June 16 2009, with a London Euston-Birmingham New Street. LM has introduced new ticketing schemes, but these are proving anything but simple. MATT CLARKE

They will total £48.80.

So, again, buy an OP Monthly Return to Willesden Junction for £27.90 - yes, only 10p more than the London fare - and it's valid back any time from Euston.

In all these cases you are legitimately saving about £20 by buying one ticket to a destination other than Euston. Put another way, anyone who buys the Anytime fares to Euston just to use in the evening peak is being legally over-charged.

In its favour, LM has admitted to me that all this is true, but that if everyone starts to book elsewhere - even though it's totally legitimate - it might have to consider more restrictions to get people onto off-peak services.

It's rather more comprehensive in the West Midlands. OP Day Returns for journeys such as Blake Street to Longbridge (wholly inside) are barred out of New Street, Snow Hill, Moor Street, Five Ways or Jewellery Quarter between 1630 and 1800, but from over the boundary you only need to book to somewhere beyond Birmingham.

For example Landywood to Birmingham has the bar, so an Anytime Day Return is £7. But Landywood to University has no bar and the OP Day Return is only £4.70. Again, whatever staff may say (and I doubt it's been explained to them), you can join at Birmingham New Street any time in the evening peak with the return half of a Landywood to University OP Day Return.

Similarly, if you want Longbridge to Coventry (£8.20 for returning in the peak), book back from Barnt Green (just outside the area) from where the £6.40 OP Return has no evening bar.

Is this what is meant by a new simplified fares structure?

Left: A Class 350/2 approaches Northampton with a London Midland train for London on May 7 2009. Tickets from here to Willesden Junction without tubes are £25.10. HARRY SAVAGE.

About the author

Barry Doe, Contributor, RAIL

Barry Doe has a bus & rail timetable web site at www.barrydoe.co.uk which also contains his rail franchise downloading. Contact him at faredealer@barrydoe.co.uk



Northern excels... ATOC doesn't

A prize should surely be awarded to Northern Rail for being the first operator since privatisation to advertise the All-Line Rover.

The operator has produced its usual excellent Rover and Ranger publicity for 2010, and in the booklet that shows details of its four main rovers it adds full details of the All-Line. Doesn't this show up the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC), which has consistently made the weak excuse that it would be difficult to do a leaflet as the costs would have to be shared by all operators and there would be disagreements about how much each should pay?

Nonsense! One sheet of paper for the country's most expensive ticket, and they want a committee to determine the way a few pounds would be split up!

One reader complained to ATOC and received a different reply: that the All-Line is bought by enthusiasts and they already know it exists. I assume ATOC thinks Transport Secretary Lord Adonis is merely an enthusiast!

As many readers have spotted, ATOC's new National Rail web site has no Rover or Ranger fares whatsoever, two months after

its relaunch. I'm told this omission is "being fixed".

Sadly this all fits in with the views of many senior railway people about ATOC. This month, I understand 14 people left. The problem is that many were railway people with excellent knowledge and much experience of the railway.

One senior railwayman told me: "The diminishing knowledge base probably suits the new hierarchy at ATOC because what they don't know they won't have to worry about. It's fast becoming an industry body without expertise."

Moving on, South West Trains has reduced the price of its First Class Anytime Returns on non-London area flows. For years they were merely twice the single - in effect going back to the days when they were Open Returns valid a month.

An example was Bournemouth to Weymouth, which last year was £46.20 - a fare I'm sure virtually nobody ever bought seeing that the Standard Class OP Day Return was only £12.60! In January SWT lowered that to £23.50 - and it's not off-peak but valid all day. Other examples are Portsmouth to Winchester for £17.80, and Lymington to Basingstoke for £32.10.

A superb new atlas from TrackMaps released

I thoroughly recommend the new Track Atlas from TrackMaps (www.trackmaps.co.uk) under the management of Mike Bridge and with a significant contribution from Gerald Jacobs, a man of vast knowledge and experience.

104 maps cover the Network Rail system (LU, PTE and private lines are not shown) with another 27 blow-ups of major areas, plus a superb index with more than 9,000 entries.

All running lines are shown, including sidings. Station platforms appear, as do crossings and tunnels. The official distance in

miles and chains is quoted - even for each portal on tunnels. Crossings are shown with their type, from Traincrew Operated to Automatic Half Barriers, and electrified routes are shown, with overhead, 3rd and 4th rail systems differentiated. Rivers are added.

To show detail clearly, while the maps are geographic some parts are 'expanded' - the volume calls it 'geo-schematic'. However, red markers are shown every five miles to assist.

With 165 A4 pages I think this one of the most valuable publications to ever appear for serious railway users. At £24.95, it's a bargain.

Disappointed by the RMT's anti-DOO stance

Last year I made about ten visits to Scotland. I find ScotRail excellent and one of the things that always greatly impresses is its attitude towards revenue protection. On virtually every journey, however short, I find my ticket is checked - something that most certainly does not happen with many English operators.

On the superb Glasgow suburban network this is because the ticket inspector is not a guard, and can concentrate fully on revenue protection. He or she doesn't have to waste

time opening and shutting doors every few minutes, as the driver does that.

I am against driver-only trains, but here we have the perfect solution and it's worked well in much of Scotland for many years.

I am, therefore, amazed at the attitude of the RMT union in not wanting to see this system used on Glasgow-Edinburgh via Airdrie, even though it consented to its use on many other parts of the network years ago. This attitude is head-in-the-sand, cannot be justified and will win the RMT no friends.