

London Transport Railways

The following selection of images is of the stock displayed in the “Underground Centenary” exhibition held at Neasden Depot, which we visited on Saturday 25th May 1963.....

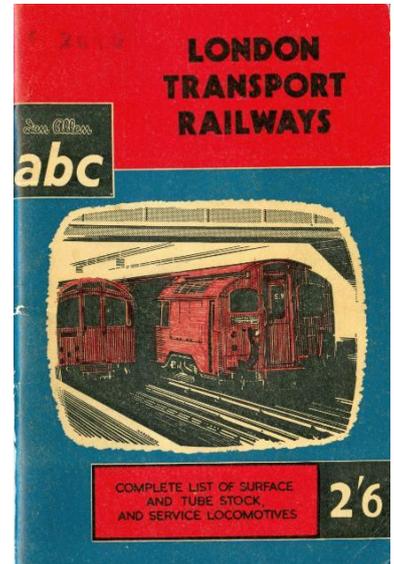


THE METROPOLITAN RAILWAY COMPANY
UNDERGROUND

1863-1963

Underground Centenary Display of Rolling Stock at Neasden Depot

Saturday May 25 and Sunday May 26 1963

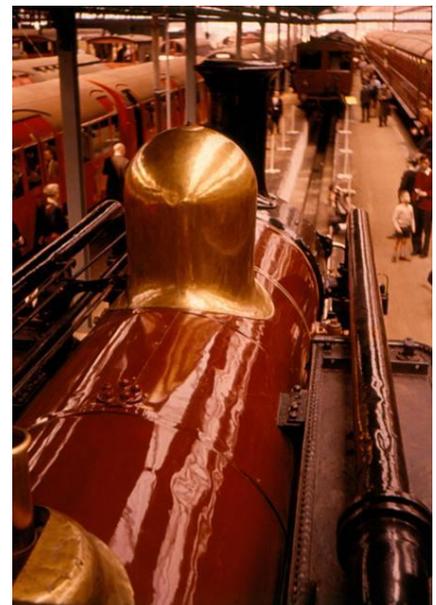


LONDON TRANSPORT RAILWAYS

Sex Atlas
abc

COMPLETE LIST OF SURFACE AND TUBE STOCK AND SERVICE LOCOMOTIVES

2/6





Sadly and inexplicably the Metropolitan Railway F class 0-6-2T locomotive L52 featured here was scrapped soon afterwards, but most of the other items, or examples of them were preserved at the later London Transport Museum, on the Bluebell and Worth Valley Railways, and elsewhere.

In 1963 and for about 10 years afterwards, there was still plenty of vintage interest to be seen out and about on the London Transport lines. The picture (right) shows a train of Metropolitan F stock at New Cross Gate, East London Line, on 17th August 1963.....



and here is an old G stock motor car trailing a District line train out of Richmond station on a very wet and misty morning of 4th April 1964.....

On that day we travelled extensively around the extremities of the system on a “Combined Rover” day ticket. At the former Great Eastern Railway station of Woodford, Essex we were surprised to find an “automatic” or “driverless” train trial in progress using one of the experimental units, on the Hainault Loop line. These were the first tests of the system later used on the new Victoria Line. Note the aerial on the front of the cab, and temporary wiring.....



The weather did not improve as we ventured on to Epping, then to Ongar.....



The latter still retaining its air of a country branch terminus despite the use of modern stock (right)

A contrast between station architectures is seen at Cockfosters (below left), an iconic LT 1930s design, and High Barnet (right) almost unaltered from its origins as a Great Northern Railway branch terminus....



In the University summer vacation breaks of both 1967 and 1968 I was fortunate to be employed by London Transport in the department of the Chief Signal Engineer at Acton Town station, in the former year working mainly on the Northern Line re-signalling scheme centred on the control room at Cobourg Street, around the side of Euston station. Sitting in our first floor offices at Acton I became aware that a steam train was passing by eastbound on most afternoons at around 4 o'clock; this was I think a stores train from Ealing Common depot to Lillie Bridge, where the ex GWR pannier tank locomotive was based. On 15th August 1967 I obtained permission to pop out to the station for a few minutes to record its passing; the offices are in right background....



A couple of days later I strolled brazenly past the Lillie Bridge Depot gatehouse brandishing my Staff Pass and was not challenged, despite the dire predictions of my office colleagues. I was thus able to see the three pannier tanks there in their native environment. Even worse, I had a camera concealed about my person, resulting in these two shots, the right hand one of which was from rather closer than desirable, as to



move any further away would have exposed my activities clearly to the bemused security man!

Acton Works despite being a much larger site was easy of access to us, being connected directly via a private internal pathway from the signal offices passing by a low bridge under the District and Piccadilly line tracks. Indeed we often went over there for lunch in the staff canteen, and encountered another of the Metropolitan electric locos, no. 5 "John Hampden", its rich maroon livery now somewhat faded, on duty as a stores shunter.....

One day at lunch I was presented with my pudding on a rather interesting plate with maroon edging, much gold leaf and a coat of arms. I said to my colleagues "I bet this is an old Metropolitan Pullman Car dish" and held it aloft so that we could examine the underside. Whereupon the guardian of the canteen, a rather large lady of West Indian origin, came over and demanded to know what was wrong with the food! Our feeble attempts at an explanation did not seem to register any comprehension at all, and we were followed by her



suspicious gaze until we finally vacated the premises. On reflection, how much more sensible it would have been for us to keep quiet and smuggle the item out under a jacket for examination at leisure later. We never saw it again.

We could also walk further, right through into the Chiswick bus works, and sit outside with a sandwich lunch on fine days watching new bus drivers being tested on the “skid pan”. The degree of confidence shown by the drivers varied enormously, with the more enthusiastic ones seeming almost trying to turn the old RT bus over on its side – which apparently did happen occasionally. Once, when they went off for their lunch break, one of the inspectors invited us lads to “have a go” ourselves, but to my lasting regret I was too timid to try, as were most of my colleagues also!

In the summer of 1968 the pressing task was the signalling of the first stage of the new Victoria Line, from Walthamstow Central to Highbury, connecting with the Piccadilly line at Finsbury Park, with a depot at Northumberland Park out in the open air beyond Tottenham (Hale) station. The control room was at Cobourg Street, shared with the Northern line, and as for the previous year the new illuminated track circuit and signalling display panels were prepared in our office at Acton. These panels were large, around 4ft x 6ft and comprised a hand-drafted diagram on fine-quality card with cut-outs for the display lights, sandwiched between two sheets of plate glass, taped together all around the edges. To convey these from Acton to Euston required two of us to carry them individually, and we were not allowed to travel in the public parts of the tube trains for safety reasons. So we were banished to the cramped back driving cabs, which did at least give an interesting view of the system, seen here on the western approach to Hammersmith Broadway station, with the new A4 road flyover crossing over at high level.....



Going to the Victoria line itself, we took the Piccadilly line to Finsbury Park, where after an indeterminate wait on the new platform, a test train would usually turn up out of the gloom.....

Here is one of my colleagues conveying our material for the day on one of these, probably to Northumberland Park depot, on 14th August:



The final part of this trek, if a friendly stores van driver did not take pity on us, was usually on foot for $\frac{3}{4}$ mile through the back streets from Tottenham station, and on one occasion we were accosted by a pair of prostitutes touting for business in mid-morning!

As already mentioned above, the Victoria line was to be the first major public train service in the UK (perhaps in the world?) automatically operated by “driverless” trains (the man sitting in the cab is the “Train Operator” whose main task in normal operation is to press a button to allow the train to start away from a station when he had ascertained visually that it was safe to do so). Coded electrical signals of varying frequency were sent along the rails to a control unit on the train which determined initial acceleration to 22mph, acceleration to full line speed of 55mph, coasting at either speed, and braking.

Working on the new line during the two month run-up to opening for passenger services on 1st September was “interesting” at times. There were opportunities for Sunday overtime on a 12-hour shift, which earned us more than for a whole normal 5-day week. These involved working alone in a section of tunnel with a bulky portable telephone connected to the tunnel wires, a powerful torch, and a “code box” which was constructed in our office. This was connected to the running rails by very large crocodile clips, and flashed various lights according to the code being transmitted along the track. In communication with Cobourg Street, we were told which code should appear, and relayed back what we were receiving. A lonely life – for 12 hours on the trot - but on one occasion I was sitting astride the rails when I clearly heard the rumbling of an approaching train from around the bend, getting slowly louder..... a panic message to the control room resulted in the calm reply “there are no trains today; the power is off”. I knew that of course, but the rumbling got ever closer, so I fled at the last moment to the nearest refuge opening as a battery-powered stores loco trundled past! The state of our “code box”, which had been perched on top of one of the running rails was a picture, as was the boss’s face when presenting him with the mortal remains on the Monday morning.

Mention of the tunnel refuges brings to mind another incident during the commissioning phase. Many of our weekdays were spent riding in the front cabs of the test trains, armed with squeegee washing-up liquid bottles filled with “whitewash”, each journey having a different assigned colour. Any fault in the code signals received when running in automatic mode of course resulted in a “fail-safe” emergency brake application. Our required action when this occurred was to immediately squirt a jet of the coloured liquid out of the side window onto the tunnel wall, to mark the spot where the fault occurred – a gang of workmen then attended each night to investigate and hopefully eliminate the causes. One of our number was apparently rather slow at reacting to the sudden stops – presumably having to pick himself up off the cab floor first – so that his paint mark was some way beyond the fault point. One day he made a really big effort to improve, but unfortunately he fired the jet just at the point where some maintenance guys were sheltering in a refuge. A group of us were on the platform at Seven Sisters when these burly men emerged from the tunnel delicately streaked with pink paint, hell bent on laying hands on the first signal engineer they saw – we all scarpered pronto!

Back at the office in the late afternoon, the faults were logged on large wall graphs, and did not appear to be diminishing at all as the opening date drew near – sometimes quite the opposite in fact. I think the main cause was the fact that the surface of the new rails was still quite rusty in places, leading to poor electrical contact with the train wheels. Panic really started to set in a couple of days before the scheduled opening, but miraculously the start of public service somehow went off entirely faultlessly!

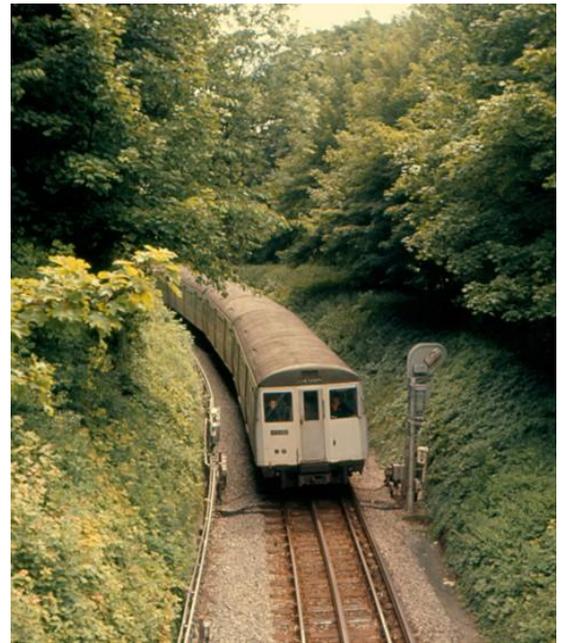
Incidentally the drawing office document store attached to our offices contained general arrangement drawings dating back to the early 1930s, including many of the Metropolitan line steam locomotives and carriage types, with details for the fitting of brake trip-cocks to them - hopefully this wonderful collection eventually found its way to the London Transport Museum.

The LT free travel pass and BR privilege rate pass of course proved very useful during my temporary employments, enabling weekend trips to such places as Norfolk and South Wales, also extensively round the

underground system. New Cross Gate was revisited, where we found the last survivors of the old Met clerestory roof carriages still in use.....



Also, for the first time, to the delightful rural Chesham branch, unfortunately by now with modern stock but still looking quite incongruous on this single-track byway out in the country.....



A curiosity found at Highgate was the old Great Northern Railway station in a cutting immediately above the Northern line underground booking hall.....



It was on the former High Barnet branch, and had been partially rebuilt as an intended tube station with central island platform and new waiting room before the 1939-45 war. However the plans were changed after the war and the eventual electric line dived below ground just to the north, just beyond the far end of the tunnels seen in the second picture. This site remained in an increasing state of dereliction for many years, until being cleared only quite recently.



Lastly, I took this picture of an elegant, apparently closed underground station entrance in Central London in August 1973, during another short spell working in the city. But unfortunately failed to record where it was, and did not print the negative for over thirty years. The power of the internet finally enabled identification as the lesser known, side entrance to Aldwych station, in Surrey Street just off the Strand. It wasn't in fact closed then, though it certainly looks it on the day I visited (probably a Sunday) and was to become so permanently from 1994.

Keith Jagers August 2005