

# THE ORIGIN OF THE LONDON CONNECTIONS MAP

by Ted Relton

In the July 2011 issue of *Underground News*, Graham Thompson recorded the last issue of the London Connections Map, stating that it had been around for almost 30 years. Actually it had origins earlier than that.

I was an official of a group called the London & Home Counties Electric Traction Society (L&HCETS). We were much exercised by the fact that British Railways did nothing to publicise their extensive London suburban services, in severe contrast to London Transport. Other than the Southern Region, the three Regions of north London hardly acknowledged the existence of these services, and beyond the regional timetables, there was no publicity at all<sup>1</sup>. London was not served at all well by having its rail services split between four Regions. The General Managers of each Region (Chief Regional Superintendents in their original guise) were monarchs of all they surveyed, and like the monarchs of bygone Europe, detested their neighbours. This resulted in the absence of three important passenger services:

1. The **Snow Hill Line** from Blackfriars, crossing central London beneath Holborn Viaduct, continuing to Farringdon, King's Cross, and Kentish Town (Southern to Eastern and London Midland Regions).
2. The **West London Line** from Clapham Junction to Willesden Junction (Southern to London Midland Region).
3. **Stratford to Hackney and Camden Road**, via the junction at Victoria Park (Eastern to London Midland Region).

All three lines had lost passenger service during the Second World War, and the division of BR into four Regions around London meant that nobody was interested in reviving any of them. It is incredible thinking of this today, when all now carry heavy passenger traffic: in fact the Stratford – Camden Road section is far more heavily trafficked than the remainder of the North London line to Richmond. An indication of the bizarre Regional thinking is that in later years, around 1980, BR allocated £100,000 for a study of where stations might be required on the West London Line. Anybody with the flimsiest knowledge of London could have answered that question: a study was not required at all.

A major example of the enmity between London Transport and British Railways came to the fore when some stories appeared in the press in the 1950s about the “ghost train” which ran from Clapham Junction to Olympia, two or three trains in each peak hour, run for the benefit of workers at the big Post Office building by Olympia. London Transport got in on the act and suggested taking a trip on this ghost train, listing about 20 bus routes which served Clapham Junction, but making no mention at all of the hundreds of trains which called there daily – despite LT using the slogan *Make the most of your public transport!*

All this was in complete contrast to the large quantities of publicity available from London Transport. It is likely that every household in London had a copy of a bus map and the Underground diagram somewhere in the house, but even in south London, there would be nothing about the extensive Southern Region, and north Londoners would be led to believe that, other than the Northern and East London lines, only bus services existed south of the river. People might know about the train service from a nearby station, but nothing about the extensive network which existed.

This very much exercised the members of the L&HCETS, who resolved to produce publicity by the Society. In view of the popularity of the Bus Map, it had been intended to produce something similar, showing ALL the rail routes in London, in diagrammatic form similar to the Underground diagram. The late John Gillham was approached in this regard. However, John Gillham detested diagrams, and would only agree to produce proper maps. Unfortunately, the committee of the Society did not explore any other channels of cartography.

---

<sup>1</sup> London Midland Region produced a range of folders of their suburban network, titled *Railway Guide, London Suburban Area*, the first two editions being undated, thereafter one for 15 September 1952 and 6-monthly to 13 June 1955. These were Beck-style, but with blobs at stations in lieu of ticks, and had tables of first and last trains to and from the terminals. There were later isolated leaflets promoting the North London Line.

Due to the decision to accept maps, two were needed to encompass all the suburban services, whereas it had been intended that one diagram could be adjusted to include the outer reaches. This led in turn to a book format, with the maps “tipped in”, rather than a single-sheet double-sided diagram.

A helpful publisher in Ramsgate came forward with an offer to produce the book, supported by adverts, and it duly appeared in March 1963 as the Greater London Railway Guide (GLRG), at a price of 1s 6d (7½p). An inner-London map was pasted inside the front cover, and an outer London, reaching to Bletchley and Hitchin in the north; Shenfield, Laindon, and Gravesend in the east; Haywards Heath in the south; and Twyford and Aylesbury in the west, inside the back cover. BR had recently started using train numbers for main-line long-distance trains, and route numbers (in the format number-letter-number-number) for suburban and local trains. As the number 2 applied to local trains, most of the BR services in the guide were 2 followed by a letter, which indicated the Operating District. The Southern Region had to be an exception to the format, as at this time most EMUs were still equipped with metal number stencils: as there was only one stencil for each digit, numbers such as 22 33 44 could not be shown. It was only with the introduction of the Hastings DEMUs which had roller blinds, that such numbers could be indicated.

The list of rail services was in two sections, for North London and South London. As the Underground uses line names, and not numbers, fictitious numbers were invented for Underground services. As the letter B had been used extensively by the North London lines, letters used were C for the Central Line, H for the District, K for the Bakerloo, M for the Metropolitan, N for the Northern and P for the Piccadilly. Of course, this approach was controversial.

For each service, every station called at was indicated, and the service interval shown – sorting out service combinations on Underground Lines in a form which ordinary passengers would understand proved difficult! There was a complication on the Southern Region in that Up calling combinations were not mirror images of Down patterns. Every effort was made to promote the idea of rail travel: it needs to be borne in mind that this was the era of the Beeching Report, and the future for the railways was uncertain at best. London Transport’s Green Line coach services were at their peak, and some of the remaining steam-worked services were poor. To add to the usefulness of the guide, there were lists of places not served by rail, with the nearest station, and stations with double names. The complete book was designed around the idea of one piece of publicity for all London’s railways.

Copies of the GLRG were sent to the publicity office of the British Railways Board, and a reply was received from Mr. John Nunneley. He invited me to discuss official publicity over lunch at the Great Western Hotel at Paddington, where I made the case for an Underground-style diagram which included BR services. He was sympathetic to the concept, but was sceptical that all the BR network around London could be incorporated in one diagram. Nevertheless, he agreed to test the idea, and must have given encouragement to his staff, as he advised me later that they had enthusiastically produced a very workable diagrammatic map. This first appeared as a poster on stations, and later became available as a pocket edition dated 1 April 1965 with the title *Greater London Network Map*. This contained only BR lines, using twelve colours to indicate the spread of routes from the terminals, and showed to the north Bedford, Hitchin and Bishops Stortford; to the east Shoeburyness and Gillingham (Kent); to the south Tunbridge Wells and Horsham; to the west Reading and Aylesbury. There was an Index to Stations alongside, adverts for rail travel, and a black-and-white diagram of the Underground central area with various forms of pecked line for each Underground line. The next edition, April 1966, was titled *Your guide to the Greater London Network*<sup>2</sup> and was to the same format, but the line colours were replaced with a motley collection of hatched lines – the whole display was ugly, and indicated that BR had already lost interest in the scheme.

The series then seems to have languished: the next items I have are two cards, one for North London and one for Southern, only the latter being dated 7 May 1973. Both use coloured lines and show a very rudimentary Circle Line for cross-London connection. These are followed by a *South East network and Awayday services* item, again undated. I cannot recall when *Awayday* was introduced as a title for day-return tickets, but memory suggests it was later in the 1970s. This edition has a notice in the centre referring to Underground connections on the reverse, and that is a simple black-and white diagram of the Circle Line and the lines within. However, there is an important footnote

---

<sup>2</sup> In these varying titles, I am reporting upper and lower case lettering as it appeared on each document.

there, *Charing Cross Station will be renamed Embankment in 1975*, so that dates the item as 1974 or 1975.

Then follow a series entitled *Your Awayday journey planner*, for the whole north and south areas, with a truncated “central area” Underground diagram in the centre. The lines are coloured, and the colour of the cover changes with each edition. An improved edition makes textual references to May 1978, and the Underground diagram for the centre is now in colour, shows the Victoria Line and the Bakerloo to Queen’s Park. The last of this series has text references to 1982, is titled *An Easy Guide to Train Services in the South East*, and reflects the era when Jimmy Saville was engaged to advertise British Rail.

I am unable to confirm Graham Thompson’s claim that the London Connections series started in 1981. As indicated above, its predecessor appears to have continued to 1982. The first diagram with a reference to London Connections is infuriatingly undated, called *Journey Planner: London Connections Map*, and is double-sided with a diagram headed London Connections including the whole of the Underground on one side, and a Network South East diagram on the other, extending to all the outer reaches of that business division of British Rail. An indication of BR’s lack of enthusiasm for the series is that the April 1994 edition, and subsequently, which reverts to showing the Underground in black hatched lines.

A parallel series to show the zones was required when the Capitalcard was introduced in 1984. One sheet showed the zones on one side, with all lines of both operators in black against zonal colours of blue, green and orange, with the London Connections diagram in full colour on the reverse. In due course the main diagram has been refitted into the zonal structure.

Over the years, London Connections has become much more open and freely available, the former enmity between the two organizations mercifully having evaporated. With the number of line changes and re-openings of recent years, each new edition contains a number of changes – in contrast to the earlier years, when nothing ever seemed to change.

I am therefore now looking forward to the appearance of the proposed new map.