

# REPORT OF SOCIETY MEETING

## 'DO NOT ALIGHT HERE'

by Kim Rennie

**A report of the LURS meeting at All Souls Club House  
on Tuesday 10 June 2014**

The June 2014 meeting welcomed back Kim Rennie, who gave an illustrated presentation entitled "Do Not Alight Here" to a 'packed house', which was a selection of photographs taken of disused and abandoned stations and sections of track, most of which isn't available to the public eye. All of the photographs taken were on official business with locations visited away from public areas properly organised within the Company's rules and procedures. The presentation was arranged in date order of 'closure' or 'resiting'.

Our extensive 'tour' began at Buckhurst Hill, which *is* available for all to see. From the west end of the westbound platform the view looked across to the Station House, now separate from the eastbound or Down line platform. The station originally had 'staggered' platforms and a section of the former Down platform could be seen by the Station House. The replacement (and present) Down platform was completed in February 1892. Underneath the Station House, the brick wall marks the spot of the former level crossing, which survived until the Central Line arrived in 1948.

We then went 'underground' with a visit to King William Street, the original City terminus of the C&SLR. The much modified station building at street level was seen along with the blue plaque attached which noted the significance of it. Various views of the station passageways and stairwells (with C&SLR tiling still in place), station tunnels and a section of iron-lined tube tunnel were featured.

We then moved to the uncompleted station at North End, also known as Bull & Bush, noting its thick concrete and nondescript surface building. Once inside and descending the concrete stairs, we came to the top landing of a lift, which is now disused but still in situ. From here we descended further down the main iron stairs to reach the lower level access. A short flight of stairs then leads to the limit of the original 1905 construction, with everything from here and back to surface level being of mid-1950s construction. It is at this level that a floodgate control centre was established in the late-1950s, the room still being place but with much of the equipment removed and what remains being in vandalised condition. In the original plans it was planned to have separate entry and exit lift access (although the shafts were never sunk) and to that end, separate access passageways were provided to and from platform level, none of which ever received any tiling. One of the passageways had lighting, the other not. At track level (the platforms were removed back in 1935) there are some buildings but much of both station tunnels comprise an empty chamber. (Readers wishing to know more about *North End* are recommended to "The London Railway Record", No.74 (January 2013) which contains a comprehensive article).

We then moved to the disused City Road station of the C&SLR, the remaining street level building now being a ventilation shaft. At track level (the platforms – in separate station tunnels – have been removed) the disused station is mostly empty, save for some items belonging to the Permanent Way department. The passageways to the former lifts are noticeably 'winding' and whilst distinctive tiling is still in place, it is not of the ornate style used on the original line.

We then went to Stockwell, the original southern terminus of the C&SLR. The station comprised an island platform in one large tunnel, which had a distinctive inwards curve at its lower level. In the disused station area is an emergency trailing crossover. With two views shown, one looked south towards the resited (1924) station, the other looking north towards Oval. Here, it was possible to appreciate the gradients just north of the station.

Walking north from Stockwell towards Oval, we saw two open chambers in the tunnel on the way, which were built for the reconstruction of the C&SLR. It was planned to keep a service of some sorts running during reconstruction which would have involved some single line working. To that end crossovers were provided at Portland Place and South Island Place. There was indeed a short period of single line working from 22 October 1923, but because of the tunnel cave-in on 27

November 1923, services were suspended instead and the crossovers were never used to their full potential – by passenger trains at least. A pump house remains operational at South Island Place.

Staying with the Northern Line, South Kentish Town closed as a result of power shortages on 5 June 1924 and was never reopened. The ruby red station building at street level still remains as does much of the Leslie Green tiling down to lower passageway level. The lower lift landings are substantially as abandoned some 90 years ago. At track level (the platforms were removed around the same time as North End) the tunnels are almost 'empty' and a view showed that it was closed before 'suicide pits' were introduced.

The three Piccadilly Line stations closed in 1932-34 were covered in turn, beginning at Down Street, whose fame during the Second World War are adequately covered in other publications. The station building with its distinctive tiling is remarkably in good condition (perhaps the residents of Mayfair wouldn't allow it to be otherwise?). Down at lower level, most of the platforms remain as the rooms for the Railway Executive Committee were built on them and in consequence are separated from the operational railway by a brick wall. The sections of platforms removed are at the west end because the space was required to construct access to and from Down Street siding, which came into use on 28 May 1933. One of the views seen shows a section of the platform area removed with the station tunnel tile rings still in situ above.

York Road station also closed in 1932 and although the surface level building remains, it is not in such a good a condition as some other closed Leslie Green stations. Again, platforms have been removed and the areas mostly empty. The derelict remains of the signal cabin is at the east end of the eastbound platform. York Road was one of the small number of 'tube' stations where the lifts came down to platform level, obviating the need for stairs and passageways.

British Museum station on the Central London closed in September 1933 and was replaced by new platforms at Holborn, slightly to the east, and providing interchange with the Piccadilly Line. Once again, the platforms have been removed and there is no access to top level. However, access to the lower passageways remain but are blocked off after a short distance and contain the remains of some wartime posters and notices.

Brompton Road was closed in 1934 and its original street level building remains. It has been put to several uses since closure and its recent 'sale' has been mentioned in a previous issue of *Underground News*. A tour of inside the station from top to platform level revealed that some of the Leslie Green tiling remained. At platform level, the railway was separated by the construction of a brick wall when the station was put to wartime use, apart from a short gap for staff access by train. .

Verney Junction, one of the Metropolitan's furthest outposts, closed to Metropolitan Line services in July 1936 but remained open to a limited main line service until the end of 1967. Our view of the former three-platform station showed just one (mothballed) track and very overgrown platforms. This route is supposed to become part of the future east-west "electric spine" in a few years' time but it is unlikely that a station will be provided here again.

St. Mary's, close to Whitechapel, closed at the end of April 1938 and we were taken on a tour of the remaining accessible parts of the station. Much of the platform area is separated from the operational railway by a brick wall but the bridge across the tracks remains in situ. We concluded this part of the tour by a look at the abandoned connection to the East London Line, which was severed at the end of 2007.

Aldgate East station was resited at the end of October 1938 and although little remains to be seen, we did note the access stairs and the station footbridge across the tracks.

North of Baker Street, the three closed Metropolitan stations were visited in turn – Lords, Marlborough Road and Swiss Cottage. Each of these three stations have been provided with emergency access in recent years as a result of 'health & safety' requirements. The surface building at Lords was lost with the building of the hotel above, but that at Marlborough Road remains, although no longer a restaurant. The Metropolitan Line side of Swiss Cottage closed in 1940 and retains some of its late-1930s coloured tiles – biscuit coloured with green edging – green was the colour of the Metropolitan Line (and other sub-surface lines) at that time.

The Metropolitan Line platforms at King's Cross were resited westwards in March 1941 but the original stairways and some of the passageways remain. At platform level, a recent addition is a new emergency staircase for evacuation purposes on the westbound.

Our brief visit to Wood Lane on the Central Line, which closed in November 1947, showed an exterior view of the station before demolition, and platform access from what was a very derelict and by then open-air ticket hall.

Quainton Road, which had closed to the Metropolitan Line in July 1936, was given a very limited Metropolitan Line service between May 1943 and May 1948. However, it continued to be served by very limited main line services until closed by British Railways in March 1963. It is now the home to the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre, although main line freight trains still use the remaining operational single track through the Up platform.

The high-level platforms at Highgate, reconstructed to London Transport standards by 1940, closed in July 1954 to the remaining meagre main line service, but the station remains intact up to a point, although much overgrown. Venturing through the tunnels we came to Park Junction and Highgate depot with some of the tracks still in situ, along with a recent view showing the test tracks provided for the Jubilee and Northern lines TBTC resignalling projects.

At the end of February 1959 the District's Acton Town – South Acton branch closed and whilst nothing remains at the latter of the District station, the shuttle (platform 5) at Acton Town remains as seen from the former shuttle overbridge.

A visit to Finsbury Park included some of the areas disused since the 1960s, presumably as a result of Victoria Line construction work and the re-arrangement and upgrade of interchange facilities. Not only that some of the tunnels that became disused through Victoria Line work were seen. Also most interesting in this visit was the disused lift areas, which had become disused by about 1920. The short-depth shafts remain to be seen (behind closed doors) to this day.

There are several areas disused around Euston Underground station, the earliest being back in August 1914 when the separate CCE&H and C&SLR entrances closed. Only the former station building remains at street level, still showing its ruby red tiles. Similarly, only the abandoned CCE&H passageways and lift shafts remain – some 90 years after closure. The C&SLR station and most of the passageways were lost in Victoria Line construction work. After 1914 only the main line station provided access to Euston Underground, known as 'Euston Interchange' as it gave access to both Underground lines. Victoria Line construction played a big part in altering arrangements at Euston, with a new northbound City platform, and the former southbound City platform widened over the former northbound track. With the diversion of the northbound City branch, the former line became the Euston 'loop' and the former C&SLR siding abandoned. The 'Interchange' access was closed in stages 1965-67 with eight new escalators provided to serve both branches of the Northern Line and the forthcoming Victoria Line. In the disused 'Interchange' subways, the old tiling and lift shafts remain (with the remains of 1960s posters) and the disused subway ticket office (for interchange between the CCE&H and the C&SLR) remains basically intact with its 'in' and 'out' sign either side of the ticket office window.

We continued our tour with the disused Tower Hill station, which was replaced by the present station in 1967 which was a little west of the present station – it was known as Mark Lane until September 1946. There is still much to be seen at lower level, including some old green tiling, some adverts at the time of closure and the surface station building remains, if you know where to look!

When major reconstruction work took place at London Bridge, a new ticket hall and escalators were provided for the Northern Line, coming into use in 1967. The remains of the old C&SLR station building of 1900 was featured.

The disused areas of the present Embankment station featured next, which included a series of views of the 'long' subway between the Bakerloo and District lines, still with much of its tiling in place. More recent closures or resittings included Hounslow West (in July 1975), Blake Hall (October 1981), North Weald and Ongar (September 1994). Also closed at the end of September 1994 was the Holborn – Aldwych branch, with views of the disused parts of Holborn (platform 5 and associated subways) and Aldwych. At the latter, we saw both the 'operational' platform (used for filming and

training) and the platform abandoned by 1917, which has been used for various trial station décor schemes.

The Jubilee Line platforms at Charing Cross closed to the public when the Jubilee Line was extended from Green Park to Stratford in November 1999. Just a little over 20 years old, the section between Green Park and the sidings at Charing Cross remains as an operational railway during times of disruption but the station's facilities on the Jubilee Line were 'mothballed' which included the passageways and escalators. It wasn't long after closure that wooden doors were put in place to isolate the area from the remaining public parts of the station. At platform level the décor is unchanged as it is occasionally used for filming.

Our tour of places 'not to alight at' ended at Shoreditch, which closed in June 2006 as part of the East London Line between there and Whitechapel was required to be integrated into the future London Overground network. The street level station building remains but its exterior is covered in graffiti. Shortly before closure we saw a clean station exterior and immaculate ticket hall. Various views at platform level were seen, all of which have now been eradicated. The last view looked at the buffer stop at the end of the line and the long-closed (and overgrown) connection to the main line into Liverpool Street.

The meeting ended with an appreciative vote of thanks for a comprehensive look at parts of the Underground system rarely seen by the public.

**Brian Hardy**