

BOOKING OFFICES AT BAKER STREET

by Brian Pask

Baker Street station as it is today is an amalgamation of three separate stations and has over the years had several different booking offices. In *London's Metropolitan Railway* by (the late) Alan A. Jackson, it contains much useful information on the locations of these, and particulars of the changes which took place with major rebuilding of parts of the station in 1891-93 and 1910-12. Confirmation of the position in 1927 is provided by a descriptive article on the Metropolitan station in the *Railway Magazine* for December of that year.

The three stations which make up the present Baker Street are:

- The Circle Line station, located beneath Marylebone Road roughly between Upper Baker Street and Allsop Place. This was part of the original Metropolitan Railway line from Bishop's Road to Farringdon Street and opened with it on 10 January 1863.
- The platforms serving the Metropolitan Main Line to Harrow and beyond, located within the triangle formed by Marylebone Road, Upper Baker Street and Allsop Place. This was opened on 13 April 1868 by the Metropolitan & St. John's Wood Railway, an independent company worked, and later absorbed by the Metropolitan. It was usually referred to by the Metropolitan as 'Baker Street East' station.
- The tube station of the Baker Street & Waterloo Railway, at a lower level beneath the site of Baker Street East, opened from 10 March 1906.

The Circle station was served at its opening by two booking offices at street level on each side of Marylebone Road at its junction with Baker Street, giving access to the up and down platforms at their west end. A new street level booking office next to Madame Tussauds (i.e. at the east end of the platforms on the north side of Marylebone Road) was added in 1888.

As part of a major rebuilding of the whole station commenced in 1910, the two original offices were replaced by a sub-surface booking hall on the north side of Marylebone Road by its junction with Upper Baker Street and a footbridge linking the two platforms. This bridge was installed in 1911, and the new booking office presumably opened at about the same time. A new entrance to this booking hall (on more or less the same site) was constructed in 1930, but it is not clear whether there was any alteration to the booking hall itself. The booking office at the east end seems likely to have disappeared as part of the 1910-12 reconstruction, its function being taken over by the rebuilt East office. However, a new entrance on the south side of Marylebone Road giving access to the east end of the Circle Line platforms was opened in April 1923 in readiness for traffic for the 1924 Wembley Exhibition. This seems to have been referred to as the Marylebone Road entrance, and became a Passimeter office in 1927.

Baker Street East appears originally to have been a completely separate station, presumably with its own booking office, although the location of this is not known. At opening the train service was a through one to the City, but this ceased from 8 March 1869 after a footbridge connecting with the east end of the Circle platforms had been added to facilitate interchange between the two stations. A major rebuilding at platform level took place in 1892-93 but it is not clear whether there was any change in booking arrangements at this time. A platform-level connection between the east ends of the two stations, with a booking office, was added in 1898.

The station was completely rebuilt in 1910-12 (although the development – above the station, which was part of the scheme – had to wait until 1929-30), and a new booking office just below street level situated roughly mid-way along the Marylebone Road frontage of the station dates from this time. This booking hall was enlarged as part of the works in 1929-30, and at the same time additional platform-level access was provided between Baker Street East and the west end of the Circle Line platforms. As part of the 1924/25 Wembley arrangements a further booking office is said to have been added in the main station (though this may have been a further window in the existing office, rather than a new office) and a temporary street level office was opened in a shop by the main entrance.

The Bakerloo station had a street level booking hall in Upper Baker Street with lifts giving access to the platforms – photographs confirm that this had two ticket windows. There was also a footbridge from this booking hall to the north end of Baker Street East platforms, and a Metropolitan booking office

in the Bakerloo booking hall. On 15 October 1914 a new escalator connection to the Bakerloo platforms was provided from a circulating area and booking office beneath the north end of Baker Street East platforms. At the same time the Metropolitan booking office in the Bakerloo booking hall closed, although the two companies agreed to sell each other's tickets.

The article in the *Railway Magazine* for December 1927 states that there were (including the Bakerloo station) six booking offices at that time:

1. At corner of Upper Baker Street, connecting direct to eastbound Circle platform and by footbridge to westbound Circle platform.
2. On south side of Marylebone Road, with stairway to Passimeter office connecting direct to westbound Circle platform and by footbridge to main circulating area.
3. In main circulating area opposite western entrance stairway, also with windows inside barrier for exchange purposes. Several outside booking windows on entrance to main circulating area to meet the needs of special traffic, but not ordinarily required. These were presumably regarded as part of the main booking office.
4. In low level circulating area in angle between extension line and eastbound Circle platforms, for exchange purposes.
5. Below outer end of extension platforms at head of escalators to Bakerloo line, for exchange purposes.
6. Bakerloo booking office in Upper Baker Street, accessible also by footbridge from outer end of extension platforms.

The only one of these offices not accounted for above is (4), which was presumably the successor (although probably resited in the 1910-12 rebuilding) to the interchange booking office opened in 1898.

After the formation of London Transport, one major change was the closure of the old Bakerloo entrance and its replacement by a new booking hall within the main station buildings. This was at the head of new escalators leading to the Bakerloo platforms and was reached by passages from Upper Baker Street (some way north of Marylebone Road), Marylebone Road (between the corner of Upper Baker Street and the entrance to the main booking hall) and the main booking hall. This alteration probably dates from the late-1930s, perhaps with the opening of the Bakerloo Line extension to Finchley Road (and onwards to Stanmore) in November 1939.

Apart from this change, the remaining five booking offices were still visible at the end of the 1950s, although (1), (4) and (5) had by this time been closed. The footbridge associated with (1), but not the booking office, was still used at times when there were events at Wembley, to provide an additional pedestrian route between the Main Line and westbound Circle platforms. However, this use ceased when the bridge and booking hall entrance were incorporated into a new pedestrian subway (not connected with the station) under Marylebone Road.

The remaining offices (2), (3) and the replacement for (6) were resited within the existing booking halls and, mechanised in connection with the more recent UTS scheme, were still in use although (2) only opened during Monday to Friday peak periods (now closed).

A surprising twist to the tail of the Baker Street story has come to light. On 30 June 1986 there was a complete review of London Underground booking office staffing and a large number of staff had to change their work locations. All the staff in the 'A' office from the Chief Clerk downwards were new at that time. They also found an accountancy nightmare: 'E' ('Bakerloo') and 'F' ('Chiltern') offices were used to having their figures juggled into the 'A' office accounts and it was felt that a deficit in either of these offices might be charged to the 'A' office staff! It was then decided to seek approval for a complete reorganisation of the ticket offices at Baker Street, which then became: 'A' the 'Main' office as before, 'B' the 'Bakerloo' office (formerly 'E') and 'C' the 'Chiltern' office' (formerly 'F').

And now, by the end of 2015 (according to the latest information), Baker Street station will have no ticket offices at all.

Thanks also to the archives of Desmond Croome for these notes. Ed.