

THE END OF 1938 TUBE STOCK ON THE PICCADILLY LINE

50 years ago on 2 December 1975, the last train of 1938 Tube Stock ran in passenger service on the Piccadilly Line, marking the end of a 24-year career with this type of stock on the line, which passed without any official ceremony.

It was not the intention for the Piccadilly Line to have 1938 Tube Stock, as the 15 trains that it inherited were earmarked for the Bakerloo Line extension to Camberwell which, of course, never happened. The story itself was complicated, as it coincided with the introduction of Uncoupling Non-driving Motor cars (UNDMs) which required reformation of many three-car units.

Two trains were loaned from June 1950 for crew training (three units from the Northern Line, one from the Bakerloo), but did not carry passengers. The first train 'proper' for the Piccadilly Line arrived from the Northern Line on 14 February 1951 – all subsequent transfers in were also from the Northern Line – but it wasn't until 8 May 1952 that a second train arrived. Others then followed, with 12 trains being on the Piccadilly by the end of 1952, the remaining three by February 1953.

Entry into passenger service was provided for in WTT No.65 from 12 November 1951 but there is no evidence available to suggest when the first train carried passengers. Of course, there was then only one train on the line so it was doubtful if it did – after all, with crew training from mid-1950, the train would be required for refresher training for train crews at least.

The next timetable was WTT No.67 from 12 May 1952, by which time a second train had recently arrived. Matters were complicated by the fact that uncoupling in slack hours was reintroduced after some 12-plus years and five three-car units transferred in had to be reformed with UNDMs¹. However, there was no provision in the working timetable for any 1938 Tube Stock paths.

Once the stock was available to work on the Piccadilly Line, initially, the available trains worked only in rush hours. After the further training had been completed, the 1938 Tube Stock was introduced gradually, as follows, none booked to uncouple. All of this was done in various Timetable Notices which were separate from the Working Timetable.

08.09.52 – 3 trains in service.

29.09.52 – 3 trains in service reformed so that the three-car units included an UNDM.

20.10.52 – 2 more trains in service (total 5).

27.10.52 – 2 more trains in service (total 7).

17.11.52 – 1 more train in service (total 8).

01.12.52 – 1 more train in service (total 9).

15.12.52 – 1 more train in service (total 10).

That appeared to remain the status quo until a new timetable (WTT No.70) was introduced from 2 November 1953, after the stock had settled down in service for about a year. This was the first WTT to nominate 1938 Tube Stock for service and uncoupling. Although there were 15 trains of 1938 Tube Stock, 13 were scheduled for service, giving two for maintenance and overhaul spares. These 13 trains were arranged to run consecutively in the morning peak at 1½-minute intervals westbound from Wood Green between 08.17½ and 08.35½. Seven of the 13 trains originated from Northfields Depot and six from Cockfosters Depot. Because of the complex working of the stock throughout the day to different destinations with different running times, a similar arrangement was not wholly possible for the evening peak, nor during either of the Saturday peaks. There were no trains of 1938 Tube Stock scheduled for service on Sundays at that point.

On the Piccadilly Line with the Pre-1938 Tube Stock, all uncoupling took place by detaching the east end three cars, so that (west) CT-T-DM (east) would go to off to depot or sidings. This added a complication for the 1938 Tube Stock, in that under normal conditions, the three-car unit faced west. So as to conform with the majority of the train formations on the Piccadilly Line, the 1938 Tube Stock was

¹ It was the original intention that all 46 of the 'D'-end 31xxx UNDMs would operate on the Bakerloo Line, but it was deemed undesirable to shunt an uncoupled M-T-UNDM unit between Watford Junction and Croxley Green Depot (with the motorman driving looking out through the communicating door of the UNDM to the depot). Therefore, 15 Bakerloo Line trains retained M-T-M formations with Watford uncoupling in mind and 15 UNDMs were allocated to the Piccadilly Line in consequence. Nonetheless, UNDM formations were suitable to shunt between platforms and sidings at Queen's Park and Stanmore. Undoubtedly this required careful planning when making up the daily service on the Bakerloo, so that an UNDM formation didn't end up at Watford Junction for uncoupling! Added to the complication was the same consideration, had there been any service disruption.

turned and worked with the 'A' end facing east and the 'D' end facing west. This enabled an uncoupled unit (west) UNDM-T-DM (east) to go to sidings or depot in the same manner as the older stock. Only when uncoupling was abandoned in early 1960 were the trains then turned to face the correct way – i.e. 'A' end west and 'D' end east.

And so, the 15 trains of 1938 Tube Stock then settled down to work on the Piccadilly Line with just four changes in the 1954-56 period:

July 1954	Trailer 012339 in 10028 unit replaced by 012173. 012339 was transferred to the Northern Line for standing space experiments.
November 1954	DM 11028 was replaced by 11141 from the Bakerloo Line, the latter being fitted with Metalistik suspension. †
January 1956	Trailer 012472 was replaced by 1949 Stock trailer 012495, which had been fitted with experimental bogies. †
October 1955	The interior of 11024 and 12007 were repainted in 'grey' prior to the colour scheme to be adopted for the 1956 and subsequent stocks up to 1962.

Note † Often, experiments on tube stock were best trialled on the Piccadilly Line, as it was close to Acton Works where any problems that arose could be dealt with swiftly.

The 15-train fleet on the Piccadilly Line remained complete until 1967. By then, service reductions and some cars damaged in various mishaps caused some transfers away, which was exacerbated by the craftsmen's strike at Acton Works in the autumn of 1969, with further transfers out. Some months after the strike had ended, some trains drifted back but never reached the maximum of 15, settling down at eight by March 1971.

This remained the status quo until 31 July 1974 (with some reformations due to the withdrawal of the UNDM cars), when all eight trains were put into store, this time because of the shortage of guards, which caused cancellations on all lines (except the Victoria, which was one-man-operated – as was the title at the time). When the staffing situation eased, three trains returned to service in March and April 1975, being used

END YEAR	TRAIN(S)
1951	1
1952	12
1953	15
1967	13
1968	11
1969	4
1970	9
1971	8
1974	Nil
April 1975	3

mostly in rush hours, as many crews disliked them when compared to the 1959 Tube Stock. Moreover, the anticipated 1973 Tube Stock was still some four months away from entering service. The first (140+141) was on 18 August 1975 although one train (108+137) was used at the opening of the Hatton Cross extension on 19 July 1975.

The last three operational trains of 1938 Tube Stock on the Piccadilly Line were –

West	East	Withdrawn
10295-012347-11295+10038-012191-12008-11038		14.11.75
10033-012406-11033+10026-012214-12002-11026		25.11.75
10029-012470-11029+10022-012216-12108-11022		09.12.75 ²

And so it was that the last train of 1938 Tube Stock on the Piccadilly Line (units 10029+11022) took place on 2 December 1975. At that time, only two trains of 1959 Tube Stock had been transferred to the Northern Line and just eight trains of 1973 Tube Stock had been commissioned for service. However, this was sufficient for the 77-train (+1x3 for Aldwych) service. The available Piccadilly Line stock allocation from 3 December was 3x1956, 73½x1959, 3½x1962 and 8x1973 – total 88 trains.

² Official withdrawal date after last run on 2 December 1975.



Above: Two views of Piccadilly Line 1938 Tube Stock when they were required to be the 'wrong way round', with views of the 'A' end facing east in Cockfosters Depot (Left) and at Acton Town (Right).

Below: After the end of uncoupling, the trains were turned again to be the right way round, seen at Hounslow West (Left) during construction work for the Heathrow extension, and Acton Town (Right).

All photos: LURS Collection



Above: 1938 Tube Stock did get as far as Hatton Cross before withdrawal, as seen at Osterley.

Photo: Capital Transport