

# REVIEWS

## BOOK REVIEWS

**“LONDON’S LABYRINTH: The World beneath the City’s Streets”** by Fiona Rule. ISBN 978-0-7110-3544-7, published by Ian Allan, price £19.99, 150x230mm, hardback, 191pp.

Every inhabitant of London and its satellites knows of the Underground. However, fewer are aware of the multi-faceted, self-contained world constructed below the capital since the mid-Victorian era. This is, by no means, the first book to explore London’s underworld, and will perhaps contain little new information for the committed troglodyte. Much of the substance covered will come as no surprise: London’s lost rivers, mostly converted to sewers, closed Underground and other lines and stations, the Post Office Railway (no longer serving those places where so much mail, today, is processed), Government bunkers and tunnels (thankfully, without the extravagant conspiracy theories permeating other related texts), and a few surprises. A modest eight pages of illustrations range from an 1825 view of the Fleet River at St. Pancras to the escalators at Canary Wharf Jubilee Line station. Perhaps of note is the brick columned subway (still in place and listed) from the now vanished Crystal Palace High Level station to the Palace grounds, which may be reused if Croydon’s Tramlink proposed extension to Crystal Palace is realised.

This is not an academic treatise, but serves as an admirable introduction to the subterranean infrastructure beyond London Underground Limited.

**Richard Thorogood**

**“CENTRAL LINE SERIES”** edited by Tamsin Dillon *et al.* ISBN 978-1-907317-90-3, published by Black Dog Publishing for *Art on the Underground*, price £12.95, 165x230mm, hardback, 88pp.

Central Line Series presents five projects commissioned and produced from 2009 to 2012 that draws on themes of communication and exchange: Michael Landy’s *Acts of Kindness* that galvanised over 700 commuters to share the stories of their experience of kindness on the Tube; artist Ruth Ewan, compose Kerry Andrew and poet Evlynn Sharp who worked with forty members of the Laburnam Boat Club to produce *A Lock is a Gate*, an album of experimental songs, a book of drawings and poster artwork for the Central Line; Anna Barham’s *White City*, a series of text and video works accessed through QR codes embedded in posters; Alice Channer’s *Hard Metal Body* at Notting Hill Gate station with designs based on imprints from clothing waistbands; *Who is Community?* A film from Bob and Roberta Smith and Tim Newton which imagines a meeting between Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympics, and Hannah Arendt, the German theorist, exploring ideas of community and freedom. Also included are several essays and colourful illustrations whose diversity reflects the range and individuality of the various projects described in this 88-page book.

A press release reveals that this is one of a series that will eventually comprise the commissions for all Tube lines. *Art on the Underground* is certainly taking up the tradition of innovative cultural presentation.

**Richard Thorogood**

**“ONE THING LEADS TO ANOTHER – EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED”** edited by Tamsin Dillon *et al.* ISBN 978-1-907317-89-7, published by Black Dog Publishing for *Art on the Underground*, price £12.95, 165x230mm, hardback, 88p.

*One Thing Leads to Another* brings together the commissioned artworks and associated events created for the 30th anniversary of the Jubilee Line. The projects explored the value of time, London Underground’s core ethic. Richard Long’s work – that titled the series and launched the commissions – was a photograph of a spectacular mountain scene overlaid with text, and as a limited edition print given away to thousands of Tube travellers. *Jubilee Line customer daydream survey* was Daria Martin’s inquiry into how people occupy the time on the Underground; Nadia Bettega gave Brent Youth Inclusion Programme five days to invent and inhabit fictional personae which became photographic portraits; Goldsmiths Art Writing MFA students gave Tube customers a way to occupy their time in *Timepieces*, a booklet of new writing and drawings; John Gerrard’s *Oil Stick Work* in the ticket hall of Canary Wharf station was a digital moving image depicting painstaking labour undertaken in a post-industrial American landscape; *The Stratford Gaff* by Matt Stokes was a multi-channel film, with a series of fleeting acts by local performers relating to the area’s history of popular entertainment; and in Linear Dryden Goodwin’s drawings and films were portraits of Jubilee Line staff

that appeared on posters and other advertising screens. Also included are essays on the history of the Jubilee Line by David Rooney, Curator of Transport at the Science Museum and a fictional piece responding to the notion of time, travel and the city by Matthew Stadler. Lavishly illustrated, contained within 88 pages as for the item above, fascinating!

**Richard Thorogood**

**“THIN CITIES”** edited by Sally Shaw and Gavin Wade. ISBN 978-0-9556119-3-3, published by *Art on the Underground*, price £9.99, 165x230mm, hardback with an unusual  $\frac{3}{4}$  dust jacket, 88pp.

Published in 2008 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Piccadilly Line, but mentioned in the press release launching the two above items, it is not clear if this similar volume is intended to be the Piccadilly’s contribution to the series or whether another will be produced. In the interests of completeness, this brief mention is now given. Leaflets and booklets produced at the time, for individual projects, were reported in the “Publicity Material” section of *Underground News*.

**Richard Thorogood**

**“JUST MY TYPE: A BOOK ABOUT FONTS”** by Simon Garfield (Profile Books 2010). ISBN 978-1846683015. £14.95

Thirty years ago, the only people who were familiar with typefaces or fonts were printers and Underground enthusiasts. The former because it was their job: the latter because of the impact the Johnston Sans<sup>1</sup> font had made on the London Transport network. The recently published book **“Just My Type: A Book about Fonts”** by Simon Garfield, which was also Radio 4’s book of the week last year, shows just how important Edward Johnston was in the development of the specialised art form called typography. Now, as a result of word processing, knowledge of the range of available fonts has become wide-spread and most people have an opinion about what constitutes an acceptable typeface.

If you ever fancied emulating Edward Johnston by designing your own font, this book may well change your mind! Not only have the number of different fonts taken off exponentially but the detail and the range of implications in the end product are truly staggering. In the early years of the First World War, there were not that many fonts to choose from. Frank Pick’s genius was that he had the vision to see that the choice of typeface would have the ability to brand his product. He said he needed a typeface that was clear and unfussy. Its function was to inform. He wanted something that was “straightforward and manly” with an alphabet where each letter was “a strong and unmistakable symbol”. Garfield says that Pick had initially considered Trajan-style lettering (the sort seen on the buildings of ancient Rome). A variation of this had been designed by Eric Gill for the shop fronts of W.H. Smith. However, Pick dismissed it as too flat and anyway there were lots of Smith’s bookshops in stations and this might have led to confusion.

Edward Johnston is described in the book as a gaunt, fine-boned man with a full moustache. He had studied medicine at Edinburgh but had been inspired by calligraphy. By 1899, he was holding classes at London’s Central School of Art and Drama, where Eric Gill was one of his students. Frank Pick and Edward Johnston were introduced through the Westminster Press, who had a contract to print posters for the Underground group. Gill was also initially involved but later withdrew due to other commitments although Garfield notes he still received 10% of the commissioning fee. By 1915, Johnston’s new font was beginning to take shape. In the lower case, three letters were particularly significant. The “o” because its internal white space is exactly half the distance the letter takes up between its adjacent neighbours, giving it a pleasing circular appearance; the “l” because it had an upturned foot to distinguish it from a capital i or the figure 1; and the “i” because it has a diamond dot that Garfield feels “still brings a smile today”. Johnston’s experience as a calligrapher and Pick’s clarity in defining his requirements meant that very few drafts were needed before the typeface was agreed. The font was first used on a practical poster that announced fares from Hammersmith to Twickenham at 4d. Future posters would be linked to well-known artists and celebrate the culture and heritage of the capital. At the time, it was not thought the typeface would be used for anything more than posters and information displays. By the time of his death in 1944<sup>12</sup>, all this had changed and the font had become ubiquitous across London Transport.

<sup>1</sup> Sans was short for sans serif which means without the twiddly bits on the end of letters, particularly capitals, that were present on the popular fonts of the age.

<sup>12</sup> Johnston’s blue plaque in Hammersmith is the only one to appear in his own font. The rest are antique English fonts with serifs.

After the Second World War, a number of adaptations of the original font were attempted. A thinner version named Johnston Light, together with an italic version, were introduced. However, by 1979, Garfield says London Transport's publicity and marketing departments were frustrated by having to use a type designed during the Great War. An overhaul was needed.

Eiichi Kono, a Japanese optics expert, was brought in. He had studied in London and subsequently worked for the design firm Banks and Miles. Over time, he extended the two weights of Johnston Sans to eight new ones. He altered several of the letters but ensured that the new versions had the circular flow of the originals and remained sufficiently different from more modern typefaces, such as Univers. Garfield says that when he came to present his work he acknowledged his Asian background "with just one word set in the revised type: **Underground**".

Garfield attempts to explain why Johnston's work was so revolutionary and inspirational. He argues that Johnston was a calligrapher who "thought with his quill". (He would use a newly sharpened turkey feather to demonstrate his lettering). He ignored the optical adjustments that later researchers believed add to the clarity of a typeface – e.g. the lower case t has to lean backwards, the dot over an "i" to be offset slightly to the left. In the Johnston font each letter stands out. "They arrest the eye".

After the new types had been introduced, guidelines from London Transport were issued. "The New Johnston typefaces must never be re-drawn, re-proportioned or altered in any way. New Johnston should be used wherever possible. If for practical reasons it can't be, use Gill Sans". Frank Pick would be pleased that his financial investment in Edward Johnston and Eric Gill was still paying dividends all these years later.

**Peter Wakeman**

## **MAGAZINE REVIEW**

**"UPGRADING LONDON'S RAILWAYS"** , Rail Magazine, Issue 714, 23 January 2013.

This special supplement contains four sections. The first section by Richard Clinnick, titled "A Breath of Fresh Air", covers the planned massive modernisation programme for the Underground. This includes the continued introduction of S Stock on the sub-surface lines until 2018, as well as the signalling upgrades on these lines. Also mentioned are intended plans for stock replacement on the Piccadilly and Bakerloo lines, the introduction dates are not yet confirmed.

The second section by Paul Prentice, titled "Crossrail Connections", covers the current progress of Europe's biggest construction project. It includes some impressive aerial photographs of some of the current Crossrail construction sites. The current status and progress of the first five Tunnel boring machines is described, as well as the disposal of different types of excavated material that is being moved by ships to Wallasea Island in the Thames Estuary to create an RSPB nature reserve.

The third section, also by Paul Prentice, titled "An Overground Success Story", covers the existing network as well a future plans, which include adding a 5<sup>th</sup> coach to some of the Class 378 units and introducing 3 or 4 car DMUs on the Gospel Oak-Barking line. Comments are included on the Mayor's proposals for Overground to incorporate some Greater Anglia and South Eastern commuter services. Some interesting photos by Anthony Guppy are included.

The fourth section, also by Richard Clinnick, titled "London Bridge is building up ...", covers the massive project for the reconstruction of London Bridge Network Rail station.

**Ian McKenzie**

## **LU 150 – ROYAL MAIL**

To mark the London Underground's sesquicentenary Royal Mail has issued, on 9 January 2013, two sets of commemorative stamps. One, of six stamps, shows the timeline of the development of the London Underground from its beginnings to the present day:

- 1863 A contemporary lithograph of a steam locomotive, on the Metropolitan Railway near Paddington station (2nd class stamp).
- 1898 Railway workers excavating a deep cut tunnel (2nd class stamp).
- 1911 A carriage of Edwardian ladies and gentlemen on their commute to work from the suburbs (1st class stamp).
- 1934 Boston Manor Art Deco station (1st class stamp).

- 1938 Classic rolling stock (£1.28 stamp – Europe)
- 1999 Jubilee Line station at Canary Wharf (£1.28 stamp – Europe).

The other set consists of a miniature sheet of four stamps, each of which has three images of classic London Underground posters:

- 1908 Golders Green, 1915 to Underground by fresh air, 1925 Summer Sales (1st class stamp).
- 1921 For the Zoo, 1931 Power, 1948 The Seen (77p – surface mail outside Europe)
- 1937 A Train every 30 Seconds, 1935 Thanks to the Underground, 1969 . Cut travelling time, Victoria line (87p – Europe).
- 1975 The London Transport Collection, 1976 London Zoo, 1987 Tate Gallery by Tube (£1.28 – Europe).

The first set of six can be purchased for £4.76, or in a presentation pack complete with a mini-history by Oliver Green for £8.80. A special edition book of first class stamps (containing two Boston Manor stamps and four ordinary definitives in the original orange) costs £3.60. The other set of four stamps, featuring classic posters, in a miniature sheet costs £3.52. A set of post cards featuring enlarged images of each stamp is available for £4.95. All of these items can be purchased from major Post Offices, by phone on 08457 641 641, or online at [www.royalmail.com](http://www.royalmail.com)

**Richard Thorogood**

## **COMMEMORATIVE COINS – LU 150**

These notes complement those by Richard Thorogood in the February issue of *Underground News*, page 100.

For the 150th anniversary of the Underground the Royal Mint has produced two different designs of £2 pound coins. One has a roundel design and the other a train design on the reverse. The obverse is the current Queen's head design. These have been minted in gold, silver and proof versions. A Piedfort (double thickness, hence twice the weight) version of both the gold and silver versions has been produced and single and two coin set versions are available of the gold and silver ones. Prices of these range from £50 to £2,000. The proof version is available in attractive packaging and includes an informative fold out sheet, price £20. Transport for London and the London Transport Museum participated in the design.

The Train coin depicts the front of a 1967 Victoria Line Tube train. Unfortunately the two live rails appear to be between the running rails! The edge inscription depicts a line with interchange circles and tick marks representing Harry Beck's map.

The Roundel coin depicts a 3-D bar and circle tilted diagonally forward from the top left with UNDERGROUND on the bar. The edge inscription reads MIND THE GAP.

The fold-out leaflet is 560mm by 380mm, two horizontal folds and three vertical, in colour on quality paper on both sides.

Across the top fold panels is a Harry Beck line in Piccadilly blue. The ticks are for 1850, 1900, 1950 and 2000 in black. 1863 and 2013 are picked out in red. Above is copy of Harry Beck's circle and tick map with a line down to 1933. Also down are lines down for 1863 Metropolitan, 1864 Hammersmith & City, 1868 District, 1884 Circle, 1890 Northern, 1989 Waterloo & City, 1900 Central, 1906 Piccadilly and 1906 Bakerloo, 1968 Victoria, 1979 Jubilee, 2007 Overground, each in its current line colour.

Across the centre fold four panels are four maps with lines to interchange circles, viz, 1855 – Plans and schemes, Initial plans for the Metropolitan Line, 1908 – It's all coming together, The first Underground railway map, 1948 – Pre-war / Post-war, Pocket Underground map No.1, 1948, 2012 – 21st century Tube, Underground map, November 2012.

Across the bottom fold are displays of representative coins through the decades. All Change, 1847 to 1855 – Queen Victoria, A penny for them, 1903 to 1908 – King Edward VII, The best plans, – 1948 George VI, The big picture, 2012 – Elizabeth II.

On the other side is a section of the Underground map embracing the Circle Line from Marylebone/Edgware Road and Euston/King's Cross St. Pancras in the north, Aldgate/Tower Hill and Tower Gateway in the east, Pimlico, Lambeth North and Borough in the south and Paddington and Earl's Court in the west. In the gaps (excuse the pun) in the current line colours are Metropolitan –

1863, Steam powered Northern – 1890, Minding the gap, Hammersmith & City – 1864, We will remember them, Central – 1900, The Twopenny Tube, District – 1868, Stand to the right, Piccadilly – 1906, Ghost in the machine, Circle – 1884, Roman remains, Bakerloo – 1906, The honeymoon suite, Victoria – 1968, A royal ticket to ride, Overground – 2007, Underground, over ground, Jubilee – 1979, Elementary, my dear Watson, Waterloo & City – 1989, Lights, camera werewolf. There is a brief description explaining each subtitle. In the gap bordered by Green Park, Piccadilly Circus, Charing Cross and Westminster is a Lost & Found section with twelve of the strangest items handed into London Underground lost property.

**Tony Morgan**