

HEATHROW TERMINAL 5 OPENS

On Friday 14 March, Her Majesty The Queen officially opened the new Terminal 5 building at Heathrow Airport. Despite new sections of Underground being previously completed (the Piccadilly Line from Heathrow T1,2,3 to Terminal 5 and Heathrow Express from Heathrow Central T1,2,3 to Terminal 5), there was no Royal opening for these. The Piccadilly Line extension to Heathrow Central (as it was then) on 16 December 1977 was a Royal occasion, as was the Terminal 4 opening on 1 April 1986 (the station opened on 12 April), the latter being in the hands of the Prince and Princess of Wales.

The opening for passengers came on Thursday 27 March 2008, for both the Piccadilly Line and Heathrow Express. Both lines and platforms lay side by side each other. A short section of blue-tinted glass 'wall' separates the two railways, so it possible to see one from the other. The Heathrow Express platforms are numbered 3 and 4, while the Piccadilly Line platforms are numbered 5 (arrival) and 6 (departure). Platforms 1 and 2 are reserved for any future main line rail expansion. Notices suggest that passengers might find it quicker to use the lifts, instead of two (or more) escalators from platform level into the terminal building.

Here on the first day, your reporter was greeted with the announcement of delays in the air terminal to passengers' baggage. This turned into a rather big problem, which resulted in a number of flights being cancelled from the all-BA terminal, not only on opening day but for many days after, and certainly as these notes were being finalised on 6 April.

Insofar as Heathrow Express services are concerned, they continue to operate every 15 minutes to Paddington daily, and call at Heathrow Central T1,2,3 on the way. Heathrow Terminal 4 is now in the hands of the Heathrow Connect stopping service. This is half-hourly to Paddington and calls at all stations except Acton Main Line. In addition a half hourly Heathrow Connect shuttle services operated between Heathrow Central T1,2,3 and Terminal 4, providing a 15-minute interval service. As before, all travel on the main line services is free between Heathrow Central T1,2,3, Terminal 4 and (now) Terminal 5.



Photographs of the Terminal 5 station at platform level and in the siding area were published in *Underground News* No.552, December 2007. Since then, station name roundels have been added to the platform and station tunnel walls and roundels applied to the glass along the platforms (*left*), and finishing touches made to the station's décor.

A rather small ticket office for Piccadilly Line passengers is located by the wider than normal automatic ticket gates, but Heathrow Express, has a large 'open' ticket office at the arrivals level.

Two separate pairs of escalators link the platforms with the arrivals level of the main terminal building. Further escalators then lead up to the departure level.

Returning to the Piccadilly Line, the new timetable for the Terminal 5 extension began on 13 January 2008, with trains running empty between T1,2,3 and T5. The Piccadilly Line 5-minute service pattern on the Heathrow branch was then changed, so that trains ran alternately –

- Hatton Cross – Terminal 4 – Terminals 1,2,3 – Hatton Cross.
- Hatton Cross – Terminals 1,2,3 – Terminal 5 (reverse) – Terminals 1,2,3 – Hatton Cross.

The method of operation at Terminal 5 and the revised procedures at Terminal 4 were described in the February 2008 issue of *Underground News*, pages 85/86. On the new Piccadilly Line car line diagram, at Heathrow Terminal 4 there is an appended note that “Trains may wait for up to 8 minutes at Terminal 4 before continuing to Terminals 1, 2, 3”.

In summary, all westbound trains serve T1,2,3, those running direct from Hatton Cross taking 3 minutes, while those via Terminal 4 take about 15 minutes (by which time they are eastbound trains!).

A joint London Underground and Heathrow Express official opening at Terminal 5 took place just after 09.00 on Thursday 27 March, which was attended by Peter Hendy, Transport Commissioner for Transport for London, Tim O’Toole, London Underground Managing Director and Brian Raven, Managing Director of Heathrow Express.

On the opening day, the Piccadilly Line didn’t fare well during the morning and early afternoon, owing to a two operational problems unconnected with the new extension. These were a signal failure on the eastbound approach to Turnham Green, where trains had to pass through the area under failure conditions from 08.10 to 09.00 and then an eastbound train at Wood Green allegedly with smoke coming from underneath it at 10.05. This latter problem resulted in a 35-minute suspension of the service.

One of your contributors arrived on the westbound platform at Holborn around midday to find just one train “1 HILLINGDON/UXBRIDGE” on the dot matrix indicator some 4 minutes away (*and Uxbridge trains about during a service disruption, too!*). There was nothing else around on departure – nothing had left Finsbury Park. The service was indeed full of gaps and bunches – Acton Town was its usual self with queues of Piccadilly Line trains approaching while late crew reliefs were sorted out in the platform. Once this had been done, the evening settled down to the normal timetabled service.

Despite the fact that the opening date for Terminal 5 has been known for some months, giving plenty of time for ‘preparation’, the ‘information’ part of the service on opening day was perhaps not all it should have been. However, it may be reported that most of the inconsistencies had been overcome after a few days.

TRAIN DESTINATION INDICATORS / INTERIOR SCROLLING SIGNS

These should now show –

This is even more remarkable as the indicators at Knightsbridge were amended to show Heathrow Terminal 1,2,3 – see *Underground News* No.537, September 2006, page 583. Other variations have also been reported. Of course the now older fluorescently lit indicators, for example at Acton Town and Barons Court westbound, continue to show plain and simple **Heathrow** with no distinction as to which route the train will take. On the positive side, a new dot matrix indicator has been installed at Hatton Cross on the westbound and shows the correct destination, route and minutes away of the approaching trains. Inside the trains beside the standback perches, the Airport Terminal information poster has been updated to reflect the changed situation.

The new patterns of operation may take a little time to bed down but even though the station staff and Train Operators did a sterling job in making useful and informative announcements, there was still that air of passenger confusion at Heathrow T123. How many people have boarded a westbound train and ended up at T5 instead, despite the announcements? At least at T5 it is only cross platform interchange to return on the next train!





The two Piccadilly Line platforms at Heathrow Terminal 5 on opening day. That photo (*above*) shows the westbound arrival platform No.5 while the photo (*left*) shows the departure platform No.6. All trains have to detrain in platform 5 and then continue on to reverse in one of the two sidings west of the station. One wonders how long it will be before LU rues the day that a crossover wasn't provided east of the station to reverse late-running services? All Heathrow photos in this section were taken on T5 opening day, 27 March 2008.

Photos: Brian Hardy



Above: Access to the main terminal building is via either escalators or lifts. The up escalator from the Piccadilly Line to the intermediate level is seen (*above left*) – another is provided far right and out of the picture for passengers arriving – and the lifts are seen in the background between the escalator and the concrete column. Looking down into the Piccadilly Line ticket hall (*above right*), showing the circulating area in the foreground and passengers negotiating the (much wider) ticket gates. The small box-like structure beyond the bottom of the escalator is the ticket office for LU services, staffed by Heathrow Express!

Below: The two Heathrow Express tracks are alongside the Piccadilly Line's platforms and are numbered 3 and 4. The two services may be seen side by side at the west end of the station separated by a tinted blue glass screen. An eight-car class 332 train is seen (*left*) awaiting departure, which will call at T123 before running non-stop to Paddington. At Heathrow T4 (*right*), the main line platforms are now only served by Heathrow Connect trains, which call at T123 and then all stations to Paddington (except Acton Main Line, and Hanwell and West Ealing on Sundays). A five-car class 360 EMU awaits departure from Terminal 4.



Heathrow Terminal 5 station is thus a shared railway station. It was designed by architects HOK International in conjunction with Rogers, Stirk, Harbour & Partners. The station is manned by Heathrow Express staff, including the Piccadilly Line side, unlike the London Underground stations at Heathrow Terminal 4 and Heathrow Terminals 1,2,3, both of which are totally separate and a long way from the Heathrow Express platforms. However, a London Underground staff presence is maintained at Terminal 5 to deal with operational matters – like failures!

In addition to the above rail links, the Terminal 5 station also has two safeguarded two platforms for use by a west-facing connection to the National Rail network. One of the aspirations is a link via a new station at Staines High Street, offering half-hourly services to Waterloo, Reading, Woking and Guildford. And then of course, there is a desire for Crossrail to serve Heathrow. All that, of course, is in the future.