

JULY 07

THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE LONDON TRANSPORT MUSEUM

by Sam Mullins, Museum Director

**A report of the LURS meeting at All Souls Club House on 13 March
2007**

The LT Museum closed in September 2005 for redevelopment, having been established in Covent Garden since 1979. Exhibit removal took five weeks. The 1871 Flower Market is a giant glasshouse, flooding the building with sunlight. This results in a wide temperature variation, far from ideal for museum exhibits, especially for all but metal objects. The redevelopment aims to control environmental conditions with roof insulation, heating and natural ventilation, at the same time increasing available space with an additional display floor and a basement lecture theatre.

The Heritage Lottery Fund is providing £9.75 million, with Transport for London providing £5.6 million, London Transport Museum Friends £700k and corporate sector sponsors another £5.0 million. There will be over a hundred of these organisations, and the museum will need to manage these relationships into the future. It is hoped that space hire for corporate functions will continue to increase over time.

Many displays were past their best, and the new museum will feature new materials, videos, topics and models. It will reflect the wider responsibilities of Transport for London over those of the original London Transport. The focus will change from transport technology, to the importance of transport in the city. When reopened in November, entry to the museum will be through the World City Gallery that will feature not only London, but also New York, Paris, Delhi, Shanghai and Tokyo.

Visitors will then take a lift up to the new top floor, which provides 20% additional display space. This level will feature Victorian London including travel on foot, by river and by horse power, and the arrival of the steam railways. Exhibits will include the replica 1829 horse bus, the 'knifeboard' horse bus and the horse tram.

Visitors will then descend into the world's first underground railway, featuring Metropolitan No.23 in a station setting on the current train floor. This area also features the electric locomotive and Chesham coach to tell the story of Metroland, and ends in a typical suburban front room, where resources about suburbia will be available.

Visitors descend again into the deep tube railways, featuring the development of the Greathead tunnelling shield, lift technology and electric traction, along with the C&SLR locomotive and 'padded cell' car. There will then be features on poster design, maps, architecture, the typeface, and moquette design. This will lead to the 1938 Tube Stock car with features on commuters through the ages, the Second World War and sheltering in the tube, and then on to the modern underground railway.

The open area of the museum will have pre-war road transport at one end, and post-war at the other. The central area will feature a 4.5-metre diameter relief model of central London from Stratford to Clapham Junction, on which overlays will be projected. These will feature the integrated transport strategy of recent years, compared with the past quarter-century and with all current transport schemes. The final display will be London in 2055, reviewing social and economic drivers leading to four possible scenarios.

An exhibition space will feature changing displays; the first will show the museum redevelopment work including archaeological excavations that revealed Georgian Turkish baths and 7th Century burials associated with the trading settlement known as Lundenwic.

It is not widely known that the museum provides safety & citizenship training of every London child at age 6 for Transport for London, so that they value public transport and use it appropriately as they grow up.

A new café is to be open to the public until late whilst the shop, which opened late-March, will feature late night opening at the end of the week. The museum reopens in November with late Friday hours. A new website will be launched in August with the new museum branding "London Transport Museum". The 's, (*as in London's Transport Museum*) adopted in 2000 to differentiate TfL's broader agenda from the former London Transport organisation, is no longer considered necessary!

In response to questions, it was explained that public opening of The Depot is suspended whilst items are transferred to the new museum building. The remaining collection is then to be rearranged and improved before a relaunch in autumn 2008. The photo library is currently busy preparing for the new museum displays, but the glass print negative collection has been sorted and repackaged by volunteers. Perhaps volunteers may also assist with the drawings collection, which lacks staff resources.

The new museum is aimed to interest a wide variety of visitors. Only 17% express a particular interest in transport, but for these there is the Museum's library, the Learning Centre, the 120-seat lecture theatre, London Transport Museum Friends, and the website which features over 12,000 photos. The reserve collection at The Depot can also be made available for research quite easily, unlike most museums that keep 99% of their collection unavailable.

The museum reopening will mark the completion of a long-held dream for many people, and is eagerly awaited.

John Hawkins