

THE DISTRICT RAILWAY PLATFORM INDICATORS A POST-POSTSCRIPT – CHARING CROSS

by Kim Rennie

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A further study of the London Transport Museum's photo collection has revealed more information on the 1905 Metropolitan District Railway (MDR) platform indicators, in this case at Charing Cross station (today's Embankment). This is another location not featured in Mike Horne's original *Metadyne* website research, possibly as the original indicators were replaced so early on, and/or perhaps because the ability to search for images online was not an option when he started first his project.

The westbound indicator consisted of 15 plates in three columns of five, whilst the eastbound one had 10 plates in two columns of five. Both were able to show the destination of up to the next three trains using the numbers '1', '2' and '3' shown on backlit glass panels.

WESTBOUND PLATFORM 1

Fig.1 looking east – 1921

EALING. <small>HOUNSLOW HARROW UXBRIDGE</small>		EALING NON-STOP		PARSON'S GREEN	q1
WIMBLEDON		WIMBLEDON NON-STOP		HOUNSLOW	
NORTHFIELDS <small>(WEST EALING)</small>		HOUNSLOW NON-STOP		ACTON TOWN	
INNER CIRCLE		RICHMOND NON-STOP		STH. KENSINGTON	
RICHMOND		PUTNEY BRIDGE		GLOUCESTER ROAD	q2

The westbound display in 1921 (Fig.1). Note that Hounslow is featured twice, both as a stand-alone HOUNSLOW plate and also on the EALING. HOUNSLOW HARROW UXBRIDGE plate used when no through trains operated and it was necessary to take an Ealing Broadway service and change at Mill Hill Park/Acton Town for a shuttle train.

Fig.2 looking east – 1931

HOUNSLOW		NORTHFIELDS <small>(WEST EALING)</small>		SPECIAL	
EALING. <small>HOUNSLOW HARROW UXBRIDGE</small>		EALING NON-STOP		PUTNEY BRIDGE	
WIMBLEDON	q1	WIMBLEDON NON-STOP		PARSON'S GREEN	
INNER CIRCLE		HOUNSLOW NON-STOP		STH. KENSINGTON	
RICHMOND	q2	RICHMOND NON-STOP		ACTON TOWN	

The situation in 1931 (Fig.2) when much of the display had been rearranged. GLOUCESTER ROAD no longer appears, but its deletion allowed SPECIAL to appear.



Above: The view east from westbound platform 1 on 4 June 1931 with parts of both westbound and eastbound indicators visible. In most cases, the lettering filled the full width of each plate. Note also the overhead wires used by the guard of trains to indicate to the motorman the right to start the train, by the guard touching wires with the tip of his flag. Note also the 'coffee pot' repeater signal attached to the westbound indicator, which was for trains reversing west to east. It is a double-sided 'coffee pot' for the westbound starter. Both aspects have illuminated during the time exposure, presumably yellow as a train had just departed, then changing to green as the section ahead cleared.



Left: The west-bound indicator at Charing Cross on 8 October 1940 after being damaged in an air-raid. The NON-STOP plates appear to have rounded ends and so differ from those seen elsewhere. The enamel sign above advises changing at Acton Town for the 'Hounslow, Harrow & Uxbridge Lines'.

The westbound 1905 MDR sign was replaced by two fluorescently-lit modern indicators (Fig.3) in 1951 in preparation for the Festival of Britain. These were clearly derived from those installed on the Central Line c.1948 to accommodate the post-war

eastern and western 'New Works' extensions. Of note is that INNER CIRCLE now appeared as CIRCLE LINE VIA HIGH ST. KEN following its renaming in 1949). As described in my original MDR indicator article (page 603 of UN 742) the central NOT STOPPING AT panel was changed sometime after 10 October 1964 to a fixed sign stating that trains served all stations up to and including Gloucester Road.

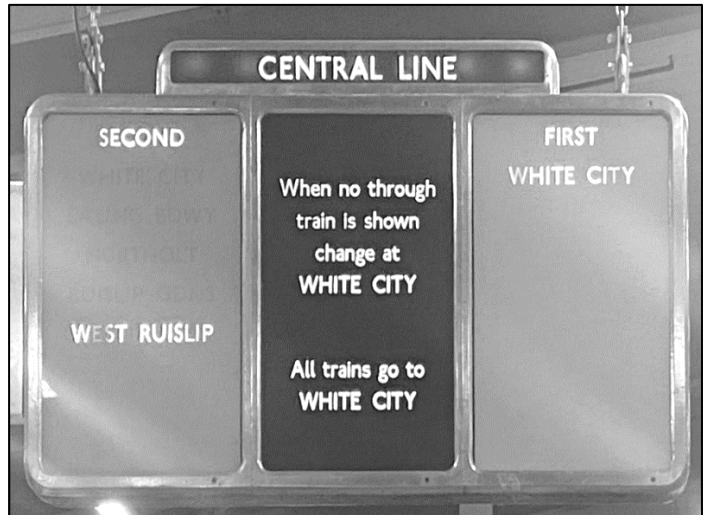
Fig.3 looking west - 1951

3	SPECIAL	WIMBLEDON NOT STOPPING AT... HOUNSLOW NOT STOPPING AT... RICHMOND NOT STOPPING AT... EALING NOT STOPPING AT...	1	CIRCLE LINE VIA HIGH ST. KEN
	PARSONS GREEN			WIMBLEDON
	PUTNEY BRIDGE			HOUNSLOW
	EALING COMMON			RICHMOND
	STH KENSINGTON			EALING
			2	

Unlit lettering in grey. The centre 'non-stopping' displays are shown only in part.



Above: Eastbound platform indicator as fitted at Bank Central Line in the late-1940s, and from which the 1951 signs were derived.



Above: Westbound Central Line indicator in later years, with the centre panel now used for a fixed display.

Photo: Kim Rennie

EASTBOUND PLATFORM 2

Fig.4 looking west - 1921

MANSION HOUSE	3	BARKING	1
INNER CIRCLE		SOUTHEND THROUGH TRAIN	
WHITECHAPEL		STOPS HERE	
BOW ROAD			
EAST HAM			
	2		

The eastbound indicator as it was in 1921 (Fig.4), when District Railway trains ran no further east than Barking. However, MDR electric locos hauled the Midland Railway/LMS services as far as Barking on the 'Southend All-Corridor Express' service and so required their own SOUTHEND THROUGH TRAIN plate.

Overleaf: Looking west from eastbound platform 2 on 10 November 1921. Could the SOUTHEND THROUGH TRAIN plate be lettered in red rather than black? None of the indicators here lasted long enough to have their plates re-lettered in Condensed Johnston Type.



By 1950 (Fig.5), the (re)-extension of District Railway services from Barking to Upminster on 12 September 1932 had seen both DAGENHAM and UPMINSTER LINE added, whilst the withdrawal of the LMS trains after 30 September 1939 led to the removal of the SOUTHEND THROUGH TRAIN plate. UPMINSTER LINE was originally used for all trains running east of Barking, even though it was possible to be short-tripped at Dagenham or Hornchurch and reverse 'on the main' if necessary.

On 24 November 1935, an electrified west-facing bay road was commissioned at Dagenham LMS station (today's Dagenham East), allowing some trains to be extended east of Barking to reverse there. Accordingly, a DAGENHAM plate was added to eastbound indicator. The provision of the bay road was no doubt in response to the development of private housing and light industry in the area, thus requiring a more frequent service east of Barking.

Fig.5 looking west – 1950

		STOPS HERE	
MANSION HOUSE		EAST HAM	
INNER CIRCLE	1	BARKING	
WHITECHAPEL		DAGENHAM	3
BOW ROAD	2	UPMINSTER LINE	

As with the westbound platform, the eastbound indicator was also replaced in 1951 (Fig.6). The full range and layout of destinations on the new sign (which would have included BOW ROAD, BARKING, DAGENHAM, PLAISTOW, WHITECHAPEL, STOPS HERE, and later, TOWER HILL) is not known to the author. Again, INNER CIRCLE is now CIRCLE LINE. A photo of this indicator appears on page 343 of *Underground News* No.750.

Fig.6 looking west – May 1951

MANSION HOUSE 2	CIRCLE LINE VIA LIVERPOOL ST. 3	
UPMINSTER 1		

The 1951 indicators were themselves replaced, this time by dot-matrix display equipment, when the District Line platforms were refurbished c.1985.