

London transport Souvenirs of travelling in



Icons of London Transport's design history, as featured in the new Design Classics set (shown at reduced size).

IT IS A TESTIMONY to the design excellence of London Transport that two of the Design Classics stamps issued on 13 January feature its icons. Credit must be given to Frank Pick (1878-1941), the head of London Underground in the 1910s and 1920s, who went on to become head of the newly-created London Transport in the 1930s, laying the foundations for outstanding design recognised the world over. He became Chairman of the Council for Art and Industry, during which time he advised the Post Office on stamp design. It was in 1933 that Harry Beck devised his Underground map, stripping it of all except the essentials to help those using the system find their way around.

During the years that the Underground system was growing, probably no one thought of using postmarks as a means of publicity. However, the centenary of its beginnings was justification, with the slogan '1863-1963 Underground A Century in London's Service' used from 20 May to 16 June 1963 at 46 London offices. The Victoria Line, linking Walthamstow in northeast London with Brixton in the south, was the first completely new line for some years, and the opening of its first section, south to Victoria, was marked by a slogan used at 10 London offices from 7 to 20 March 1969. It read 'Victoria Line through the West End Now Open', and was used in the standard position, with the date stamp on the left and slogan on the right, at all except Battersea, where it is known transposed (with the slogan on the left). In 1971 the remainder of the line opened to Brixton, reason for another slogan 'Victoria Line Now Open to Brixton', used at five London offices from 23 July to 16 September, known also at London WC on 17 September.

For years it reached tantalisingly close, then in 1977 the Piccadilly Line was finally extended to connect with Heathrow Airport. On 16 December 1977 a handstamp was in use: 'Piccadilly Line Heathrow Airport Extension Hounslow Middx'. The opening was also publicised by a slogan campaign in London, from 2 to 15 December 1977 reading 'Underground to Heathrow Opens Dec 16', and then from 16 December 'Underground to Heathrow Now Open'. (A moveable date circular handstamp exists for Heathrow Airport reading 'Heathrow Airport London Hounslow Middx/Middlesex': the initial version, unframed and with 'Middx', was in use from 1 October 1974 until 21 November 1979; a second framed and slightly smaller version with 'Middlesex' was introduced on 22 November 1979.)

Below: handstamps marking stages in the Piccadilly Line's Heathrow Airport extension, and the Royal opening of the new Jubilee Line.



the capital, by Richard West

The Jubilee Line After much deliberation as to its course, another new line was opened in 1979, the Jubilee Line, taking over the Bakerloo Line from Stanmore to Baker Street, continuing to Charing Cross, and later to Stratford. (The initial thought was to call it the Fleet Line, passing through the Docklands area of London to Thamesmead.) A handstamp was in use on 30 April 1979, reading 'Opening by H.R.H. The Prince of Wales The Silver Jubilee Line London w.c.2'.

The new line and refurbished Charing Cross Station opened to the public on 1 May 1979. The seat recesses on the Jubilee Line platforms at the station (disused since the Jubilee Line was extended to Stratford) featured views of Nelson's Column, the work of the leading British stamp designer David Gentleman. David also created a mural for the station's Northern Line platforms, telling the story of the erection of the original Charing Cross, one of a number of crosses in memory of Eleanor of Castile, the wife of King Edward I. In fact, on the day, there was more press coverage for David's work than for the new Underground line.

Many areas that the Fleet Line was intended to reach in the rejuvenated parts of east London are now served by the Docklands Light Railway, a system of driverless trains opened in 1987. On 30 July 1987 a handstamp read 'Docklands Light Railway London E1'.

Anniversary postmarks Two other handstamps have marked anniversaries of London's rail network: on 8 August 1973 '75th anniversary Waterloo & City Railway Waterloo London se' (the Waterloo & City Line connecting Waterloo Station to Bank is now part of London's Underground), and on 30 July 2000 'Centenary Central London Railway Shepherd's Bush w12' (now the Central Line).

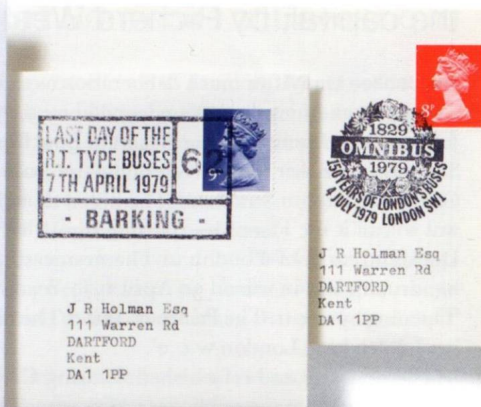
At one time a branch of the Northern Line, originally known as the Northern City Line, linked Moorgate with Finsbury Park. This branch ceased to be part of the Northern Line, and closed for refurbishment, on 4 October 1975, another reason for a special handstamp.

Thinking of the Northern Line, its origins are to be found in the City and South London Railway, opened to the public on 18 November 1890. The centenary was marked by the issue of a sheetlet of four 'Underground Letter Service' labels, designed by Darren Tattenden and printed by Enschedé of The Netherlands (shown above). The labels feature Northern Line stock of 1890, 1923, 1938 and 1972. It is worth noting that at one time several of the railways that now constitute the London Underground system operated letter and parcel services. Incidentally, while no British stamp has featured Underground stock, examples can be seen on stamps from Bequia, Fujeira, Laos and Nevis. ▶



Above: a sheetlet of labels for the Northern Line's centenary, and a handstamp for the 75th anniversary of the Waterloo & City Railway. Below: a detail from David Gentleman's mural at Charing Cross station.





From left: Routemasters on a German Stampex cover; 1979 handstamps for the last day of RT services and 150 years of London buses; a cover for Amersham bus garage's 60th anniversary; and a transport police anniversary handstamp.

The Routemaster London Transport came into being in 1933, and soon established a reputation for superb engineering and design, as exemplified by the 1938 Underground stock, the RT bus and later the Routemaster. Unveiled in 1954, the Routemaster underwent extensive development, so full production only began toward the end of the decade. Such was its durability that it survived its successors and finally, too soon for many, ceased normal service in London in December 2005.

The 50th anniversary of London Transport was the subject of a handstamp on 17 March 1983 reading '50th London Transport Golden Jubilee 1933-1983'. In 1993 the diamond jubilee was marked by a slogan postmark used at 17 offices from 1 July to 31 December reading '60 '33 '93 Sixty years passenger service for the Capital'. In 1979 London had celebrated the 150th anniversary of its first bus service, launched on 4 July 1829 using the omnibuses of George Shillibeer. The anniversary was marked by a special handstamp '1829 Omnibus 1979 150 Years of London's Buses London sw1'. That same year, the bus that preceded the Routemaster in London service, the RT, saw its last day in normal use; this was marked by a handstamp used at Barking on 7 April 1979 reading 'Last Day of the R.T. Type Bus Barking'.

The Routemaster has, of course, previously appeared on a British stamp, in the Classic Double Deck Buses set issued 15 May 2001. Many special handstamps were in use on the day of issue, with a number being especially pertinent to London's transport. A handstamp used at the British Philatelic Bureau prominently featured 'RM' (the designation given to the Routemaster) in its design, while the style of the destination blind on the front of the Routemasters was adapted for a handstamp, with 'May 15 2001' and the route number, 'Classic British Double Decker Buses' as the points en route, and 'London WC2' as the final destination. The Routemaster was also depicted on the following handstamps: 'Leyland Lancashire 15th May 2001'; 'Classic British Buses Leyland Lanes 15th May 2001'; 'Classic British Buses Westminster London 15th May 2001'; 'Buses 15.5.01 Britain's Favourite Bus Magazine London sw'; 'British Buses London 15 May 2001'.



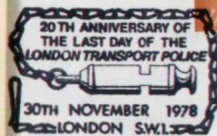
The Routemaster (third from left) in the 2001 Buses issue.



AMERSHAM BUS GARAGE – GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY
WEDNESDAY, 14th AUGUST, 1935 - 1985



L.C.S.
Amersham



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The alternative handstamp from Royal Mail for the day of issue featured a bell push, and was inscribed 'Covent Garden'. This was a most appropriate location, as Covent Garden is the home of the London Transport Museum. Another handstamp in use on 15 May depicted the London Buses roundel with 'London's Transport Museum 15 May 2001'. The museum started life in Clapham in south London, and on 23 April 1973 a handstamp in use in London SW4 declared 'Museum of British Transport Final Day'. The museum then moved to Syon Park, before settling in its present premises at Covent Garden. There the new museum opening was marked by a handstamp on 28 March 1980 – 'The London Transport Museum Covent Garden'. (For a short time it was known as London's Transport Museum but in 2007, when the museum reopened after an extensive refurbishment, the apostrophe was dropped.)

The Routemaster also appears on a handstamp of 28 February 2007, and on the associated cover, from the German Post Office to mark Spring Stampex 2007.

Expanding the collection There are five final items for a collection linked to London Transport. A handstamp on 30 November 1978 recorded '20th anniversary of the Last Day of the London Transport Police London SW1'. A slogan reading 'UITP International Union of Public Transport 38th Congress May 11-17 London 69' was in use at London SE1 from 11 to 15 May 1969 in the standard position, and from 15 to 17 May in the transposed position. On 1 March 1979 a handstamp recorded '125th Anniversary of Paddington Station London W2'. Another handstamp to celebrate a London terminus reads '125th anniversary waterloo Station 11th July 1972 London SE'. Finally, to mark its golden jubilee Amersham Bus Garage held an open day on 14 August 1985, for which a special cover was produced, the stamp being cancelled with a normal Amersham handstamp: Amersham came within the 'Country' area of London Transport using buses painted green, instead of that image recognised the world over of the famous red London bus ●

References Various editions of *Slogan Postmarks of the United Kingdom*, by C R H Parsons, Colin G Peachey and George R Pearson; and *Special Events Postmarks of the United Kingdom* by G R Pearson; *Mails under London* by L C Stanway, published in 2000 by the Association of Essex Philatelic Societies.