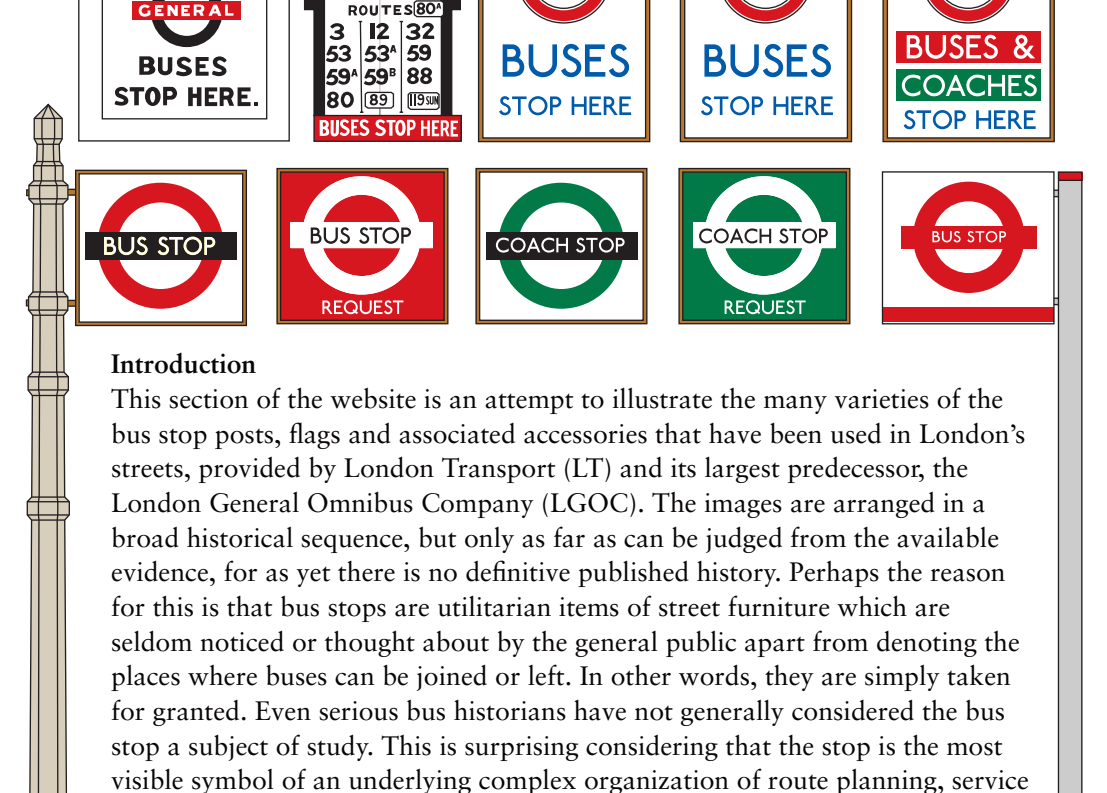


THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LONDON BUS STOP

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Introduction
This section of the website is an attempt to illustrate the many varieties of the bus stop posts, flags and associated accessories that have been used in London's streets, provided by London Transport (LT) and its largest predecessor, the London General Omnibus Company (LGOC). The images are arranged in a broad historical sequence, but only as far as can be judged from the available evidence, for as yet there is no definitive published history. Perhaps the reason for this is that bus stops are utilitarian items of street furniture which are seldom noticed or thought about by the general public apart from denoting the places where buses can be joined or left. In other words, they are simply taken for granted. Even serious bus historians have not generally considered the bus stop a subject of study. This is surprising considering that the stop is the most visible symbol of an underlying complex organization of route planning, service scheduling, vehicle and staff rostering, and publicity, to name just a few aspects. There are now about 19,000 bus stops served by Transport for London.

A detailed historical study of London's bus stops and their administration, based on original sources, would be of great interest and enlightenment. Such a work would also help to persuade the average bus enthusiast that there is more to buses than just the vehicles. Pending such a contribution, it is hoped that the following introductory notes provide at least some historical context. They are mostly drawn from available secondary sources and the conclusions drawn must be regarded as strictly provisional until confirmed or negated from consulting original records.

1. Early Marking of Fixed Stopping Places
It can be said that during the era of the horse bus fixed stopping points were unknown. Passengers were free to hail the bus anywhere along the route and likewise alight wherever they wished. Perhaps this was not too much of an imposition to the operators, as all the time the bus was stationary the horses were resting (which they certainly needed as they led a hard life). Probably there were points along each route established by long-standing custom and practice where the buses always halted. The widespread introduction of motor buses from 1905 onwards initially caused no alteration in these arrangements.

It seems that it was during the First World War that fixed stopping points for buses were first identified by bus stop signs mounted on the roadside. This was probably to help regulate the greatly increased numbers of passengers travelling, many of them strangers to London, and with the hope that they might form a queue to board instead of struggling in a mass. The photographic evidence suggests that the posts, at least to start with, were of a temporary character, made of wood and simply placed free-standing on the pavement. They were located at various busy places in central London such as the major railway terminals and important traffic junctions. How much of an innovation this was thought to be at the time is hard to judge at this distance, as trams, legally 'light railways' (as, later, were trolleybuses) had been legally required to have designated stopping places ever since their introduction.

Immediately following the war passenger numbers did not decline but continued to rise, often causing long queues while waiting, while at the same time motor traffic of all descriptions was increasing. Traffic congestion was such that in 1919 a Select Committee of the House of Commons was inquiring into the problem. At a meeting of this Committee held on 1st July 1919, Herbert Blain, operating manager of the London Traffic Combine, in giving evidence suggested, among other points:

...simplification of the present procedure – with any Parliamentary sanction necessary – with regard to queues, fixed stopping places for omnibuses, and the regulation of traffic points. [*The Times*, 2nd July 1919]

In other words, introduction of fixed stops for buses would not be for the greater convenience of bus passengers but in order to ease traffic congestion generally.

One of the first acts of the Ministry of Transport after it was created in September 1919 was to appoint an Advisory Committee on London Traffic to examine the problems of traffic congestion and to make recommendations for alleviating it. One of the committee's suggestions was to experiment with a scheme of fixed stopping points for buses on all routes traversing two busy stretches of road in west and north-west London.



Figure 1.1: LGOC announcement, *The Times*, Tuesday 17th February 1920.

The scheme came into effect on Wednesday 18th February 1920 when *The Times* gave its readers some additional details:

From today all omnibuses running between Cricklewood and Victoria and Hammersmith and Piccadilly will stop only at points indicated by conspicuous notice boards. The following thoroughfares are affected: (a) Cricklewood Road, part of Edgware Road, Kilburn High Road, Maida Vale, Park Lane, and Grosvenor Place; (b) Hammersmith Road, Kensington Road, Kensington High Street, Knightsbridge, Hyde Park Corner, and Piccadilly. This is an experiment which has been arranged by the Advisory Committee on London Traffic to regulate the number of stops made by the omnibuses, and thus improve street traffic conditions. The stopping posts are of two types, 'Compulsory' and 'By Request', and are fixed roughly 300 yards apart, so that in no event will the public have to walk a distance of more than 150 yards to a point.

The experiment marked the inception of the concept of separate compulsory and request stops, although for the latter the introduction was premature. Illustrations of what almost certainly are the 'white boards' referred to will be found in Figures 1.2 and 1.3, below.



Figure 1.2: An example of the 'white board' introduced for the 1920 experimental fixed stop scheme between Piccadilly and Hammersmith, this one being 'by request'. The rudimentary wooden post suggests that the scheme was introduced with some haste. Reproduced from George Robbins and Alan Thomas, *London Buses Between the Wars* [Marshall Harris & Baldwin Ltd, 1980].

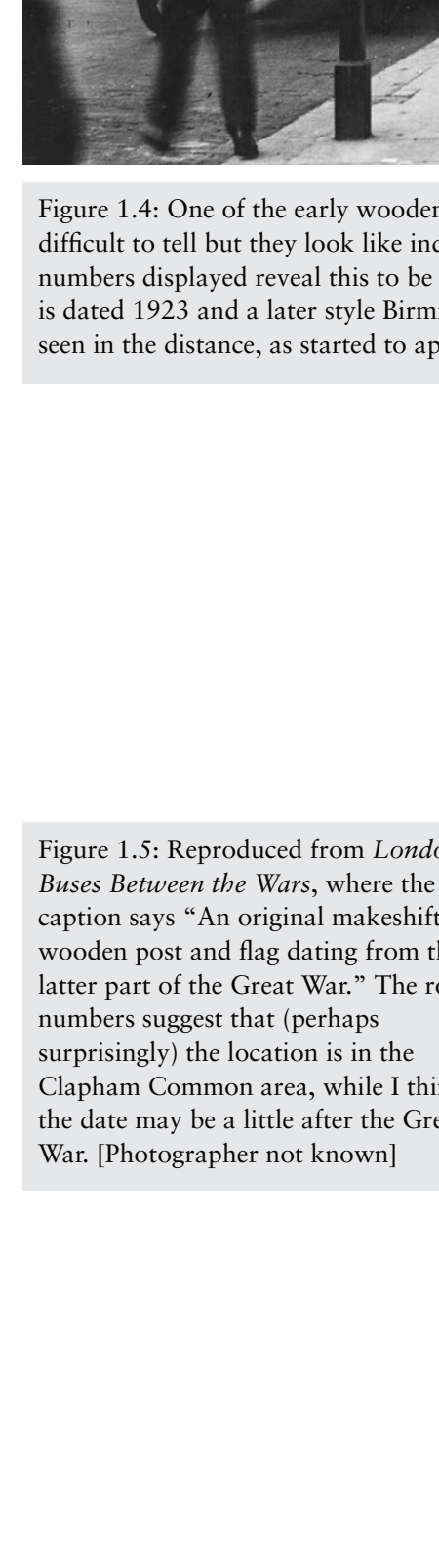


Figure 1.3: The 'compulsory' version of the 1920 'white board', in this example bolted to a convenient lamp post. [LTM 1998/86325; February 1920]

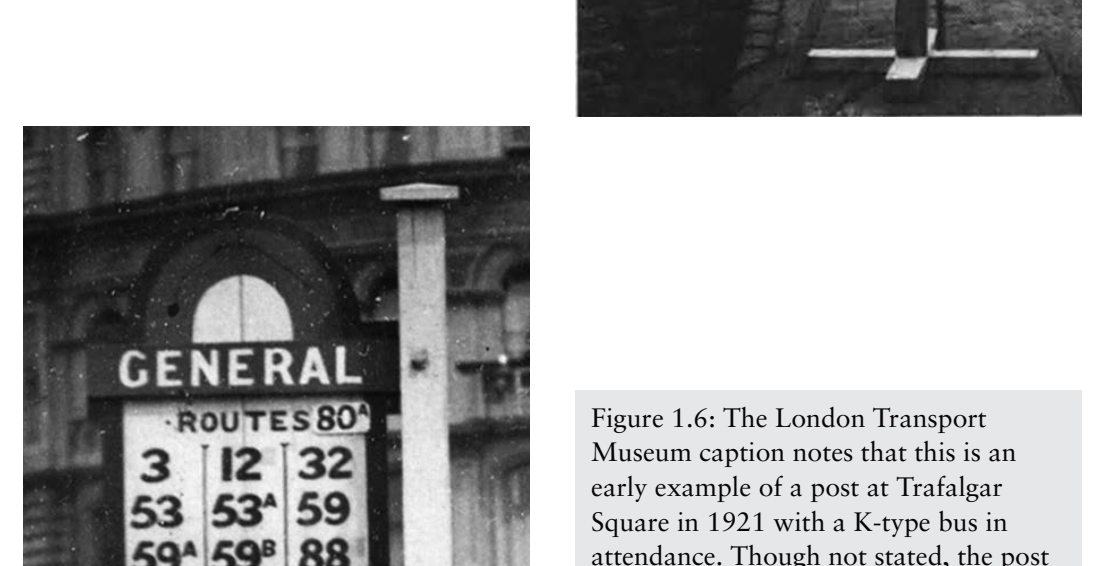


Figure 1.4: One of the early wooden flags but now with route numbers added. It is difficult to tell but they look like individual 'tiles' though still hand painted. The route numbers displayed reveal this to be in Oxford Street, outside Selfridges. The photograph is dated 1923 and a later style Birmingham Guild post with bronze framed flag can be seen in the distance, as started to appear from about 1921. [LTM 1999/5628].



Figure 1.5: Reproduced from *London Buses Between the Wars*, where the caption says "An original makeshift wooden post and flag dating from the latter part of the Great War." The route numbers suggest that (perhaps surprisingly) the location is in the Clapham Common area, while I think the date may be a little after the Great War. [Photographer not known]

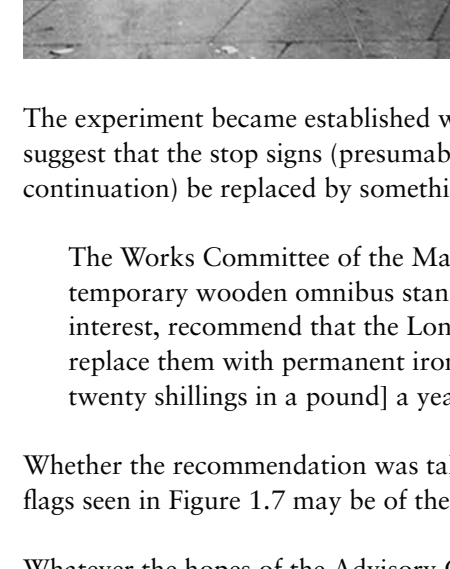
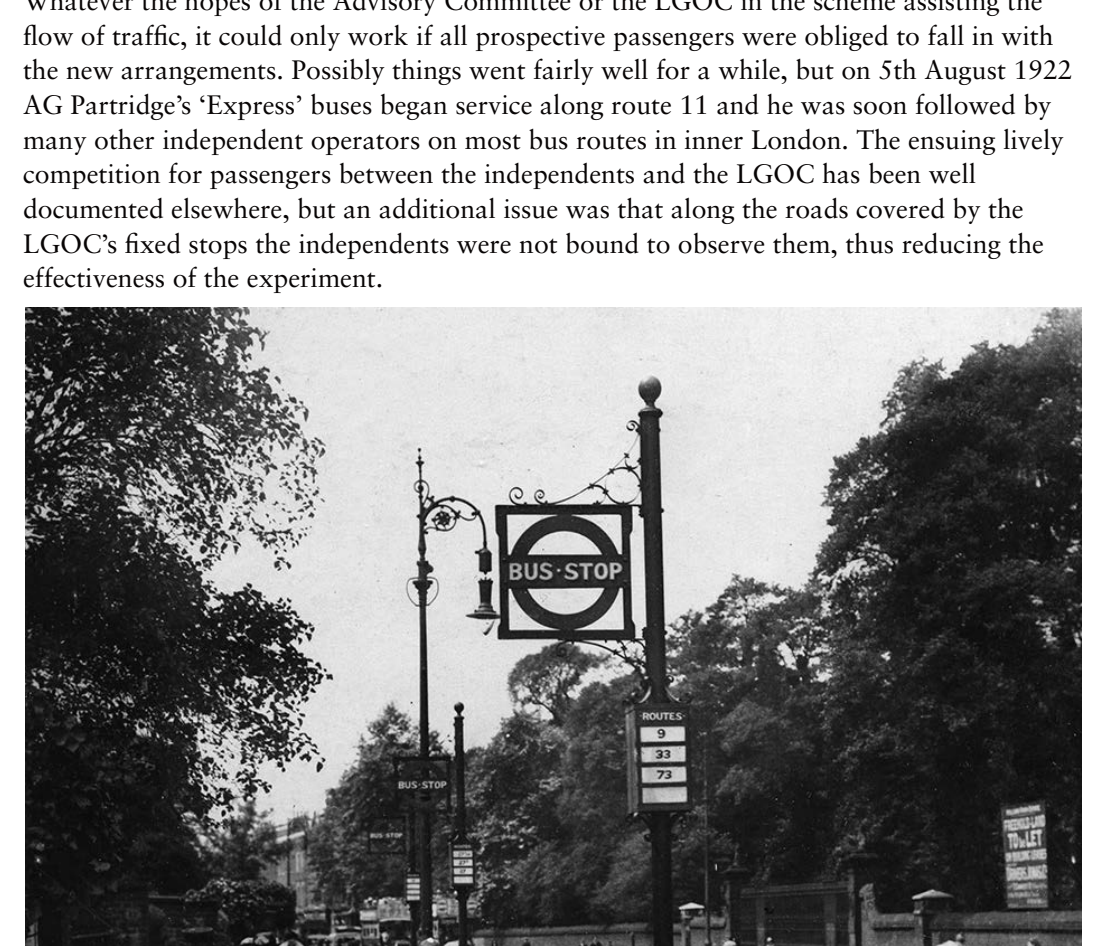


Figure 1.6: The London Transport Museum caption notes that this is an early example of a post at Trafalgar Square in 1921 with a K-type bus in attendance. Though not stated, the post is probably of wood and the whole structure very different from the cast iron ones that followed. Route numbers were painted onto a wooden board also with some rather makeshift additions it seems. I cannot be certain but the '147' on the post is probably an early example of the site numbering system which grew enormously. [LTM 1999/6884]



The experiment became established well enough for St. Marylebone Borough Council to suggest that the stop signs (presumably referring to those along the Edgware Road and its continuation) be replaced by something more substantial:

The Works Committee of the Marylebone Borough Council, being of opinion that the temporary wooden omnibus standards in the streets have proved to be in the public interest, recommend that the London General Omnibus Company be permitted to replace them with permanent iron signs, on the payment of one shilling [there were twenty shillings in a pound] a year for each sign. [*The Times*, 18th January 1922]

Whether the recommendation was taken up is unknown but, if it was, the pierced metal flags seen in Figure 1.7 may be of the pattern adopted.

Whatever the hopes of the Advisory Committee or the LGOC in the scheme assisting the flow of traffic, it could only work if all prospective passengers were obliged to fall in with the new arrangements. Possibly things went fairly well for a while, but on 5th August 1922 AG Partridge's 'Express' buses began service along route 111 and he was soon followed by many other independent operators on most bus routes in inner London. The ensuing lively competition for passengers between the independents and the LGOC has been well documented elsewhere, but an additional issue was that along the roads covered by the LGOC's fixed stops the independents were not bound to observe them, thus reducing the effectiveness of the experiment.

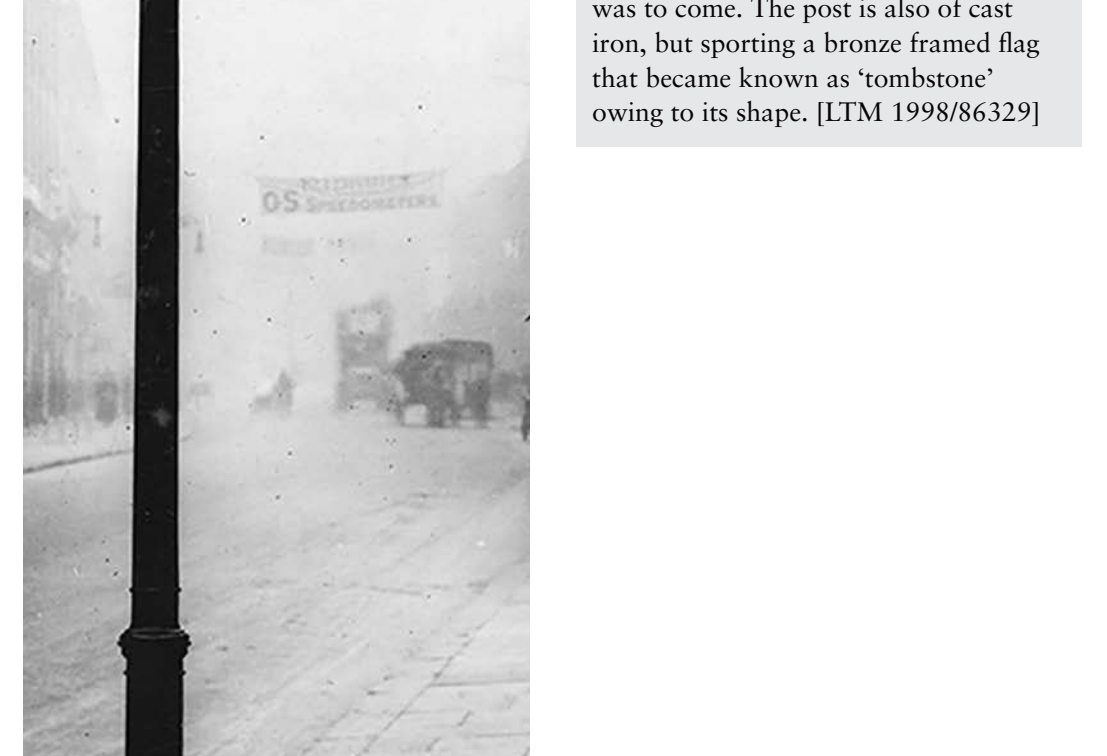


Figure 1.7: An early example of a cast iron post stated in the London Transport Museum caption as in 1921. The caption does not state the manufacturer. Also not stated is the location, but the route numbers reveal it to be in Kensington, south of Hyde Park. The flag is not solid, as can be seen more clearly on those in the distance. [LTM 1999/20207]

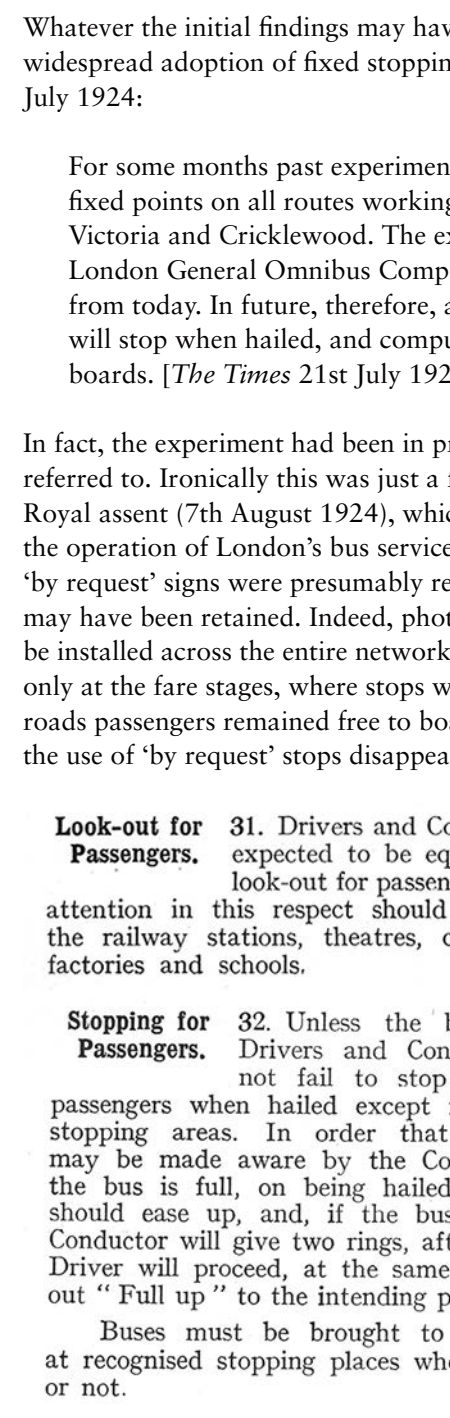


Figure 1.8: The LT Museum caption describes this as being in Hammersmith Road, Hammersmith in 1921 and therefore a very early example of what was to come. The post is also of cast iron, but sporting a bronze framed flag that became known as 'tombstone' owing to its shape. [LTM 1998/86329]

Whatever the initial findings may have indicated, the time was not yet right for the widespread adoption of fixed stopping places and the experiment was brought to an end in July 1924:

For some months past experiments have been carried out in stopping omnibuses at fixed points on all routes working between Hammersmith and Piccadilly, and between Victoria and Cricklewood. The experiment has not proved entirely satisfactory, and the London General Omnibus Company have therefore decided to abandon the scheme from today. In future, therefore, all 'General' omnibuses working on the above routes will stop when hailed, and compulsory stops will be made at all points on the fare boards. [*The Times* 21st July 1924]

In fact, the experiment had been in progress for over four years, not the 'some months' referred to. Ironically this was just a fortnight before the London Traffic Act 1924 received Royal assent (7th August 1924), which for the first time brought a degree of regulation into the operation of London's bus services. Along the roads concerned in the experiment the 'by request' signs were presumably removed but the signs at the compulsory fare stage stops may have been retained. Indeed, photographic evidence suggests that bus stops continued to be installed across the entire network in the years following but they were probably located only at the fare stages, where stops were compulsory anyway. At all other places along the roads passengers remained free to board and alight wherever they wished. In consequence the use of 'by request' stops disappeared for over a decade.

Look-out for 31. Drivers and Conductors are expected to be equally on the look-out for passengers. Special attention in this respect should be paid to the railway stations, theatres, cinema halls, factories and schools.

Stopping for 32. Unless the bus be full, Passengers. Drivers and Conductors shall not fail to stop to pick up passengers when hailed except in prohibited stopping areas. In order that the Driver may be made aware by the Conductor that the bus is full, on being hailed, the Driver should ease up, and, if the bus is full, the Conductor will give two rings, after which the Driver will proceed, at the same time calling out "Full up" to the intending passengers.

Buses must be brought to a standstill at recognised stopping places whether full up or not.

Figure 1.9: These extracts are from the General's *Rules & Regulations for Operating Employees*, dated 1st September 1927, making clear the requirements for picking up passengers. There is of course no reference to request stops. The 'recognised stopping places' may mean the fare stage compulsory stops, though the meaning of 'prohibited stopping areas' is not obvious. [courtesy of Barry Weatherhead]

2. Photographic Sources

The historical photographic record is understandably incomplete and some images I have found may be of prototypes and/or one-offs. I have tried to stick to the regular and commonplace, rather than distort matters with the former. I have also not ventured into the extensive realm of flags fitted to lampposts, traction standards, and other street furniture.

Finding a meaningful way of portraying London's bus stop furniture is difficult. They are basically a kit of parts comprising a post and many different purposes of flag, with different designs for compulsory or request, for bus or for coach, or for both, and in all four permutations (Green Line coaches were introduced in name in 1930). Earlier designs had separate full-size flags for bus and coach where both served the same stop.

The design and material construction of the posts developed in several phases over the decades, being of wood, cast iron, concrete, and now aluminium. Posts could also be unadorned, though they commonly and latterly supported various accessories, such as Fare Stage plates and/or local Where to Board Your Bus identifying letters, and of course timetable cases. For the purposes of this essay, I have not discussed other plates and stickers sometimes fitted but that were not for public notice.

3. Birmingham Guild Posts

Presumably the earliest fixed stopping posts and flags were regarded as worthy of pursuit and rather more sophisticated ones followed after the Great War.

The London Historical Research Group of The Omnibus Society records that iron posts, manufactured by the Birmingham Guild of Ironfounders were erected extensively between 1923 and 1929. These are now more succinctly known as Birmingham Guild posts. The few photographs of these metal posts in their earliest days suggest first they were cylindrical on a square base (figure 1.7), though from Birmingham Guild I cannot say.

Subsequent posts were gently tapered (figure 1.8) being an early example. Apart from some minor differences in section where a raised flat area for the fixing of an information panel was added, these existed with two or three fixing points for the flags, though within those there were different configurations of the fixing collars according to the size and style of flag to be bolted to them. It is uncertain what colour these posts were painted, though they were dark green towards the end of their lives. Two of these are preserved in the London Transport Museum store at Acton (figures 3.10 and 3.11).

Once flag design settled down after the early years of development, the unfortunately named 'tombstone' shape became the norm. Two flat metal plates were held within a bronze frame, back-to-back. Several variants existed according to the location, this also meant that the posts were manufactured to different flag fixing patterns.

The cast iron post and enamelled bus stop was designed by Llewelyn Roberts [Tony Peart, *Indian Summer: The Re-invention of the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft in the Twentieth Century*, The Decorative Arts Society 1850 to the Present; Journal 44, 2020]. In this piece the author cites as his source *The Birmingham Guild Ltd., Architectural & Decorative Metalworkers*, circa 1932, from his own collection.



Figure 3.1: The LT Museum caption says this photograph was taken in 1936. It is of a Birmingham Guild post, with three fixing points, for the flag and location name frame. Though absorbed into London Transport in 1933, General flags were still in place some years later. [LTM 1998/52341]

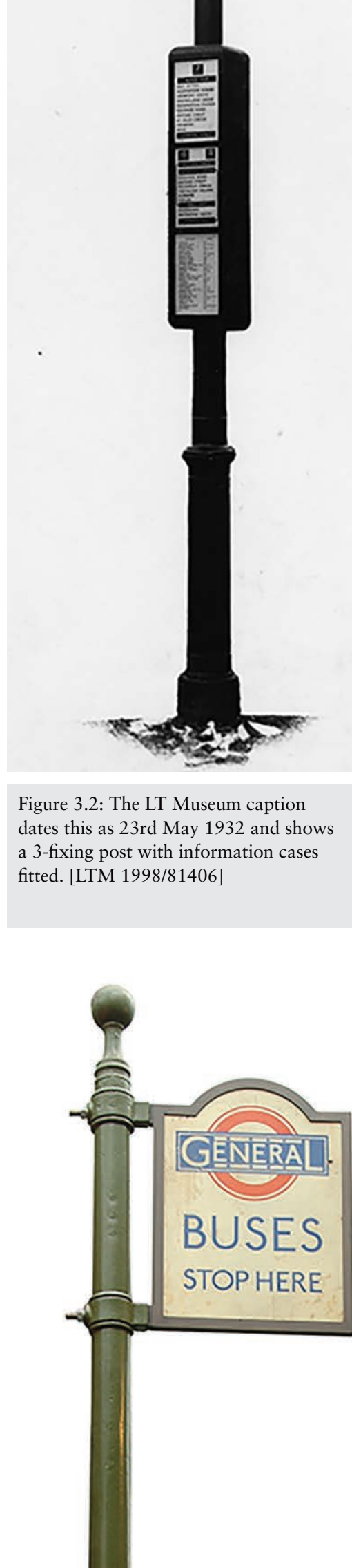


Figure 3.2: The LT Museum caption dates this as 23rd May 1932 and shows a 3-fixing post with information cases fitted. [LTM 1998/81406]

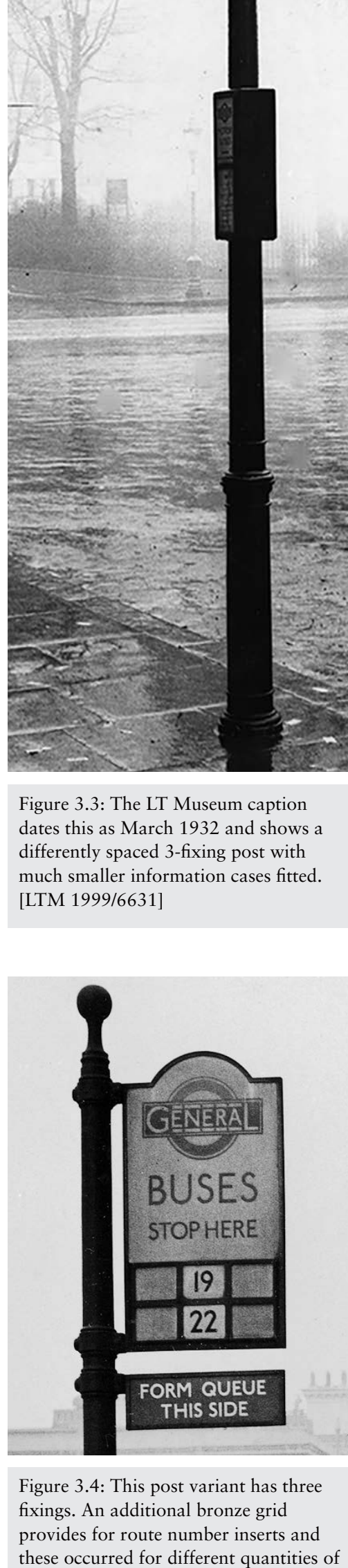


Figure 3.3: The LT Museum caption dates this as March 1932 and shows a differently spaced 3-fixing post with much smaller information cases fitted. [LTM 1999/6631]



Figure 3.4: This post variant has three fixings. An additional bronze grid provides for route number inserts and these occurred for different quantities of numbers. A separate bronze frame contains the queue instruction as seen on 26th February 1936. [LTM 1998/52342]



Figure 3.5: The same fixings and route number configuration, though this time the separate bronze frame contains the place name in February 1936. [LTM 1998/52341]

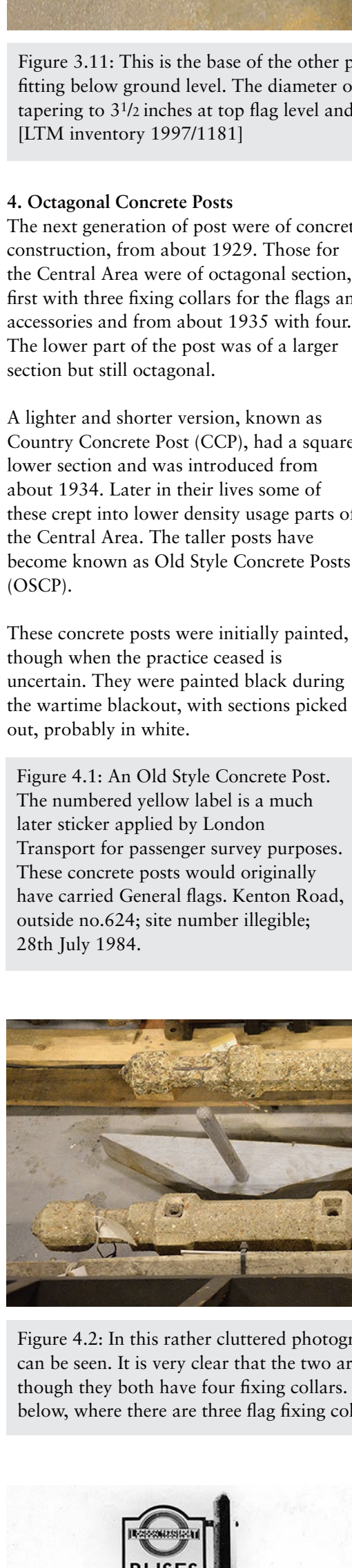
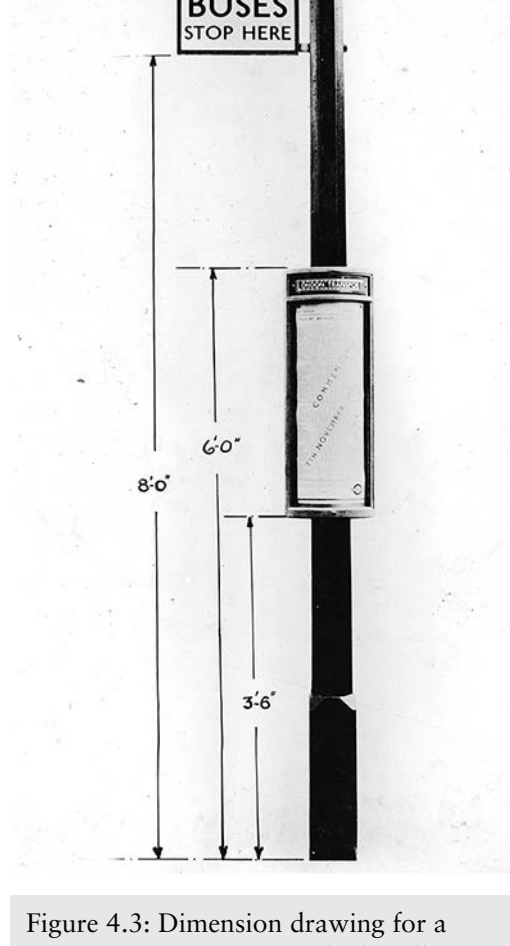


Figure 3.7: The same overall size of flag and separate bronze queue instruction frame but with differently spaced post fixings, as seen in April 1935. [LTM 1998/52339]



Figures 3.8 and 3.9 Still in use a hundred years later, two rare surviving Birmingham Guild posts. These had a larger diameter base than can be seen here, probably swallowed by progressively rising pavements. A current design flag and accessories have been strapped to the posts, though the original fixing collars for the flags may still be seen – two on the left and three on the right. Left: St. Paul's Road, outside no.8, N1; site no.930; 9th May 2015. [courtesy of John Liffen.] Right: West End Lane, outside no.256, NW6; site no.12044; 25th February 2023.



Figure 3.10: One of the two 3-fixing point posts at the Acton store. [LTM inventory 1998/3153]



Figure 3.11: This is the base of the other post at Acton, showing the flange and prong fitting below ground level. The diameter of the cylinder above ground level is 8-inches, tapering to 3 1/2 inches at top flag level and below the decorative finial. [LTM inventory 1997/1181]

4. Octagonal Concrete Posts

The next generation of post were of concrete construction, from about 1929. Those for the Central Area were of octagonal section, first with three fixing collars for the flags and accessories and from about 1935 with a four section but still octagonal.

A lighter and shorter version, known as Country Concrete Post (CCP), had a square lower section and was introduced from about 1934. Later in their lives some of these crept into lower density usage parts of the Central Area. The taller posts have become known as Old Style Concrete Posts (OSCP).

These concrete posts were initially painted, though when the practice ceased is uncertain. They were painted black during the war, probably in white.

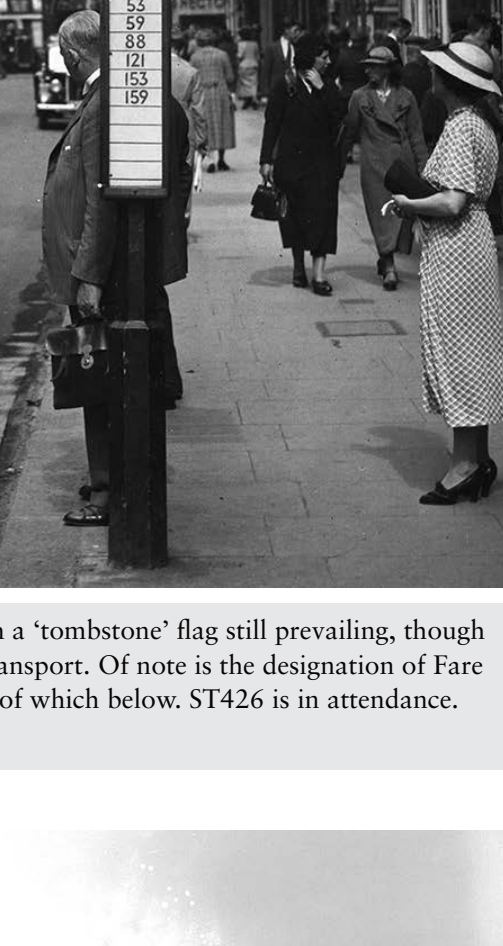


Figure 4.1: An Old Style Concrete Post. The numbered yellow label is a much later sticker applied by London Transport for passenger survey purposes. These concrete posts would originally have carried General flags. Kenton Road, outside no.624; site number illegible; 28th July 1984.

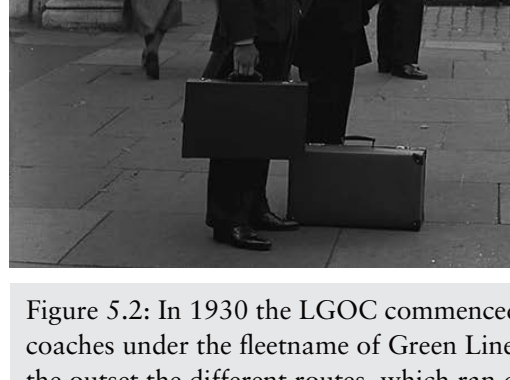


Figure 4.2: In this rather cluttered photograph taken at Acton the tops of two OSCP's can be seen. It is very clear that the two are of different aggregate composition, even though they both have four fixing collars. In some of the contemporary photographs below, where there are three flag fixing collars, each of those is less substantial.



Figure 4.3: Dimension drawing for a Country Concrete Post, which sadly leaves us none the wiser as to the overall height, though it can probably be calculated with little difficulty. [1998/54905; February 1935]

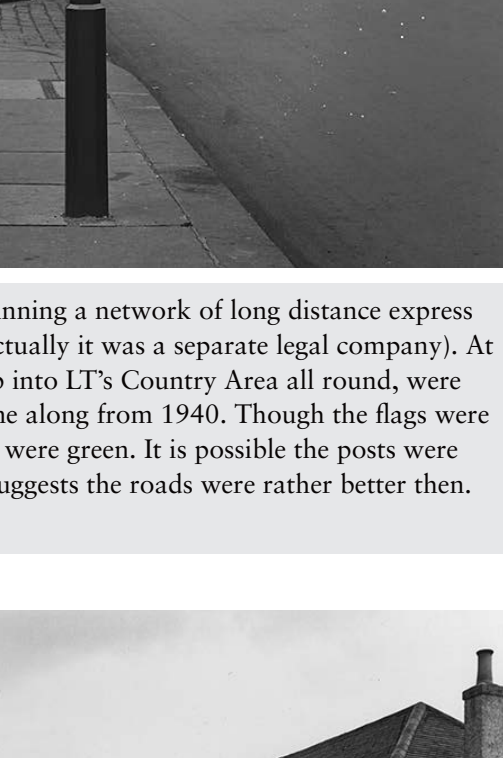


Figure 4.4: A Country Concrete Post in Watford Way, Edgware, opposite no.140; site number missing; 28th July 1984.

5. London Transport is Born

The London Passenger Transport Board (London Transport) came into effect on 1st July 1933 and absorbed by far the largest bus operator, the LGOC (General), as well as many others. With the extent of the infrastructure in place in the street, it was some time before the public would have noticed any difference. Flags and buses were gradually replaced with similar ones stating London Transport.

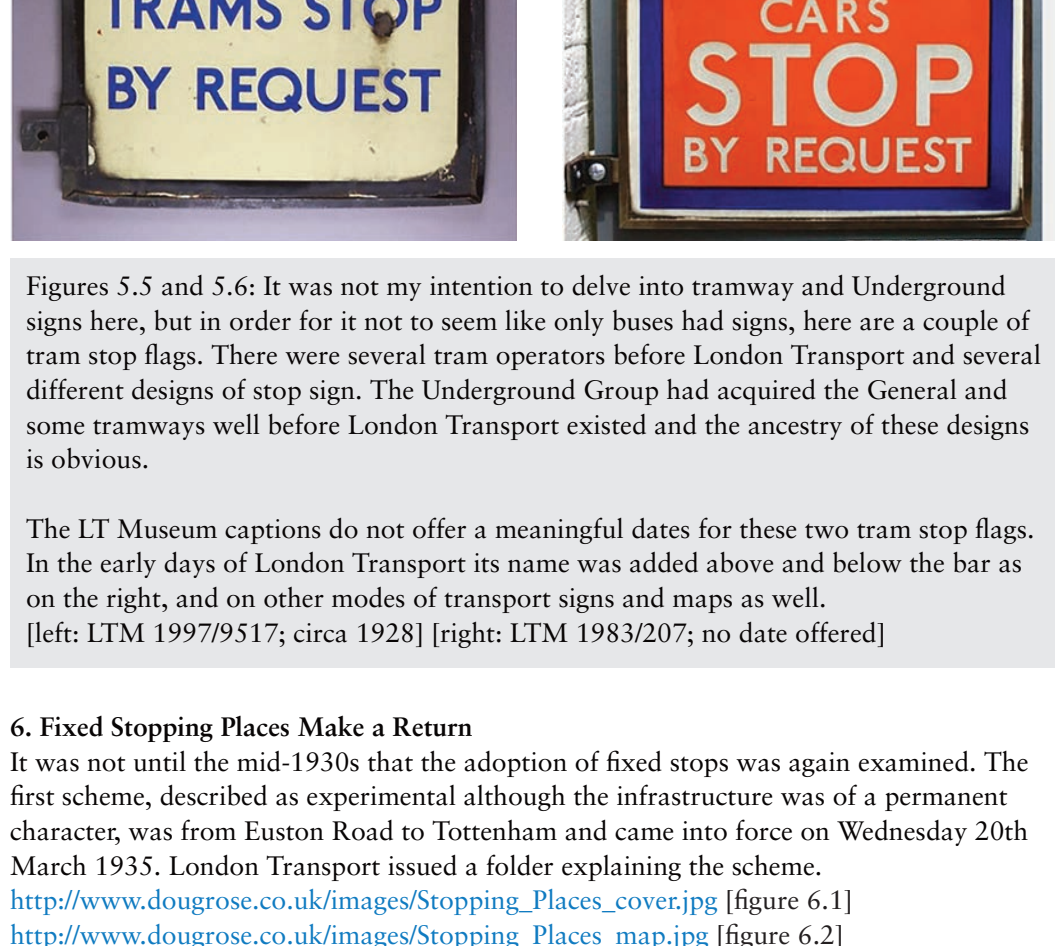


Figure 5.1: A then current 3-fixing OSCP with a 'tombstone' flag still prevailing, though the General logo has given way to London Transport. Of note is the designation of Fare Stage clearly part of the flag design and more of which below. ST426 is in attendance. [LTM 1998/53615; August 1937]

Figure 5.2: In 1930 the LGOC commenced running a network of long distance express coaches under the fleetnames of Green Line (actually it was a separate legal company). At the outset the different routes, which ran deep into LT's Country Area all round, were each identified by a shape. Route numbers came along from 1940. Though the flags were still of the traditional shape for the time, they were green. It is possible the posts were too, judging by this photograph, which also suggests the roads were rather better then. [LTM 2002/6505; 11th August 1933]

Figure 5.3: A combined bus and coach (Green Line) stop at the junction of High Road and Great West Road, Chiswick. The shelter is described as an 'East Kent type' and rather puts to shame those provided now. [LTM 1998/67314; 3rd July 1939]

Figure 5.4: The LT Museum caption is uncertain of the date. It is an example of the uncertain new London Transport bar & circle as designed by Edward Johnston and oozes elegance. This would have been fitted to a CCP. [LTM 1983/209; circa 1934]

Figures 5.5 and 5.6: It was not my intention to delve into tramway and Underground signs here, but in order for it not to seem like only buses had signs, here are a couple of tram stop flags. There were several tram operators before London Transport and several different designs of stop sign. The Underground Group had acquired the General and some tramways well before London Transport existed and the ancestry of these designs is obvious.

The LT Museum captions do not offer a meaningful dates for these two tram stop flags. In the early days of London Transport its name was added above and below the bar as on the right, and on other modes of transport signs and maps as well. [left: LTM 1997/9517; circa 1928] [right: LTM 1983/207; no date offered]

6. Fixed Stopping Places Make a Return

It was not until the mid-1930s that the adoption of fixed stops was again examined. The first scheme, described as experimental although the infrastructure was of a permanent character, was from Euston Road to Tottenham and came into force on Wednesday 20th March 1935. London Transport issued a folder explaining the scheme. http://www.dougrose.co.uk/images/Stopping_Places_cover.jpg [figure 6.1] http://www.dougrose.co.uk/images/Stopping_Places_map.jpg [figure 6.2]

It stated:

Your co-operation invited. With a view of relieving traffic congestion and enabling the tram and bus services to adhere to the scheduled time-tables, until further notice the vehicles will stop only at the points indicated on the diagram on the reverse side of this folder. Passengers desiring to board or alight at 'By request' stops must give a clear signal to the driver or conductor.

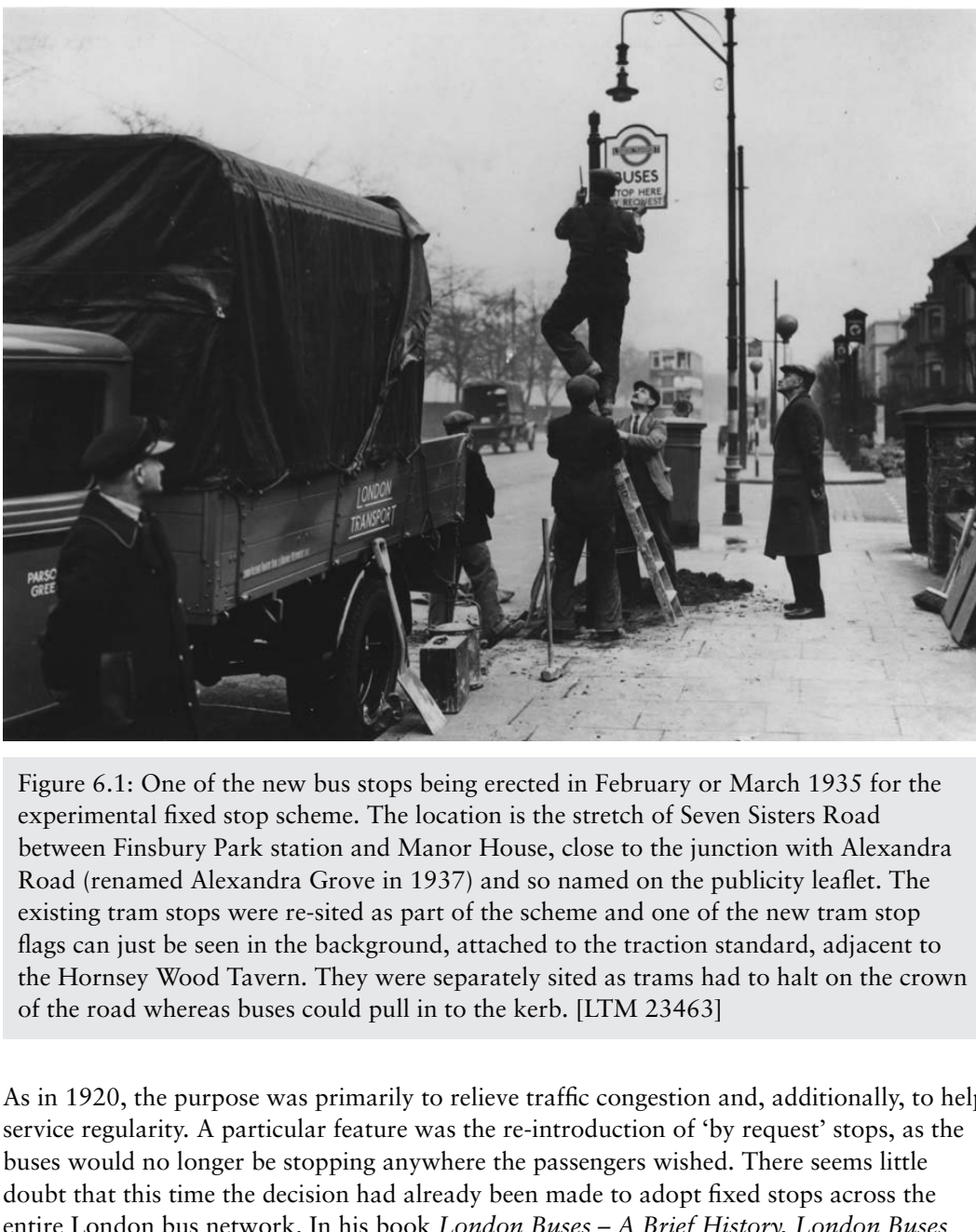


Figure 6.1: One of the new bus stops being erected in February or March 1935 for the experimental fixed stop scheme. The location is the stretch of Seven Sisters Road between Finsbury Park station and Manor House, close to the junction with Alexandra Road (renamed Alexandra Grove in 1937) and so named on the publicity leaflet. The existing tram stops were re-sited as part of the scheme and one of the new tram stop flags can just be seen in the background, attached to the traction standard, adjacent to the Hornsey Wood Tavern. They were separately sited as trams had to halt on the crown of the road whereas buses could pull in to the kerb. [LTM 23463]

As in 1920, the purpose was primarily to relieve traffic congestion and, additionally, to help service regularity. A particular feature was the re-introduction of 'by request' stops, as the buses would no longer be stopping anywhere the passengers wished. There seems little doubt that this time the decision had already been made to adopt fixed stops across the entire London bus network. In his book *London Buses – A Brief History, London Buses Past & Present*, John Reed says that by 1937 nearly 150 miles of road had fixed bus stops. Whether or not the whole of the Central and Country Areas had been completed by the outbreak of war in September 1939 is unknown, but certainly by soon after the war the entire LT area had fixed bus stops. Whatever the circumstances this was a considerable exercise.

7. Rectangular Bronze Frame Flags

The stop flags along the Seven Sisters Road experiment had been of the existing 'tombstone' pattern but with the impending roll-out of thousands more, and with the design revolution sweeping through LT at this time, it became clear that a simpler, more modern design was called for. Hans Schlegler (1898-1976), a prominent German designer and illustrator who settled in Britain in 1932, was commissioned to prepare a new design of stop flag. These started to appear in about 1936 and were of a straightforward rectangular form, generally mounted back-to-back within a bronze frame. There were separate styles for bus and coach. For the sake of clarity here: 'bus' referred to Central Area red buses as well as Country Area green ones; 'coach' referred to the longer distance Green Line express services.

Where both facilities served a single stop, the two plates were stacked within a single bronze frame, divided by a horizontal bar, the Minutes of the monthly Press & Publicity Meeting of 23rd December 1948 recorded that the first split bus and coach stop sign had been erected on 1st December of that year. It is also possible that at this time fare stages began to be specifically indicated on the stops concerned, as there would be additional compulsory stops between each fare stage and the existence of a bus stop in itself no longer denoted a fare stage.

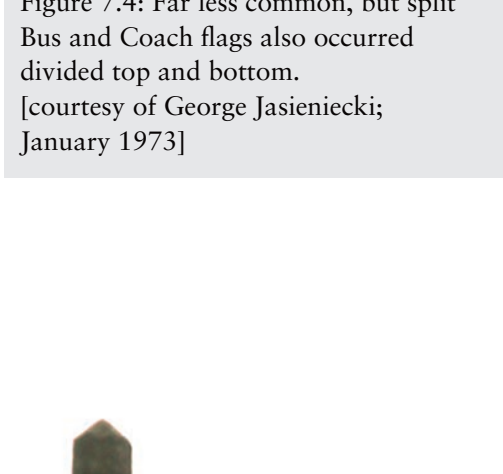


Figure 7.1: A Bus Compulsory stop flag. [LTM 1995/2254; 1950]

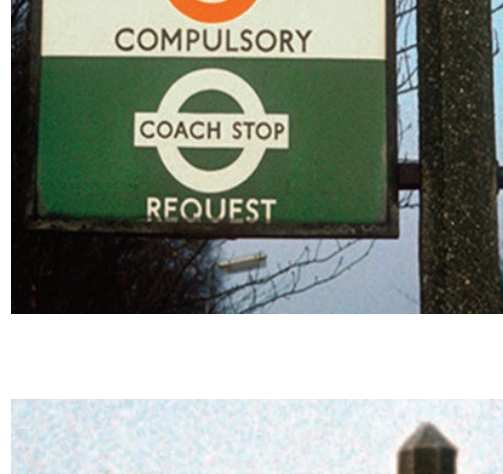
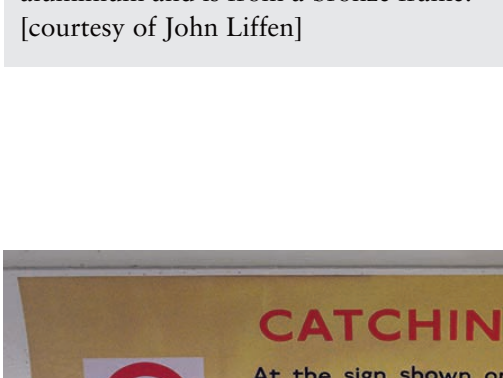


Figure 7.2: A single bronze frame with an integral horizontal divider showing the bolt fixings for the post. The pairing is of a Bus Request and a Coach Request. In practice any combination of flag types could be paired, though the slender photographic record suggests 'bus' was always at the top. [LTM 1995/2258; 1950]



Figure 7.3: A split Bus & Coach Request flag. [photographer and date not known]

Figure 7.4: Far less common, but split Bus and Coach flags also occurred divided top and bottom. [courtesy of George Jasieniecki; January 1973]



Figures 7.5 and 7.6: Both Compulsory and Request flags were also made to a taller specification for fitting to OSCPs. [courtesy of George Jasieniecki; both January 1973]

Figure 7.7: Tram flags had a blue background. This insert was made of aluminium and is from a bronze frame. [courtesy of John Liffen]

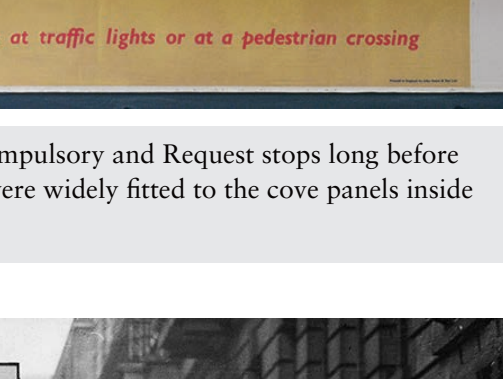


Figure 7.8: LT posted messages to explain Compulsory and Request stops long before this example, which dates from 1965. They were widely fitted to the cove panels inside buses. Size: 8x26 inches.



Figure 7.9: A Schlegler Compulsory cap on an Old Style Concrete Post in wartime blackout condition. The LT Museum caption says "at an unspecified location"; it is on the east side of Baker Street outside London Transport's enquiries office. [LTM 1998/53797; 1942]



Figure 7.10: The LT Museum caption states this as a scene in Brixton Hill. A Birmingham Guild post is supporting a single bronze frame with integral horizontal dividing bar and separate 'queue' frame. [LTM 1998/68783; 31st August 1939]



Figure 7.11: This post at Marble Arch has three fixing points though the spacing of them has the lower two close together. Evidence of wartime blackout painting can be seen on the post. [LTM 2009/12455; December 1940]

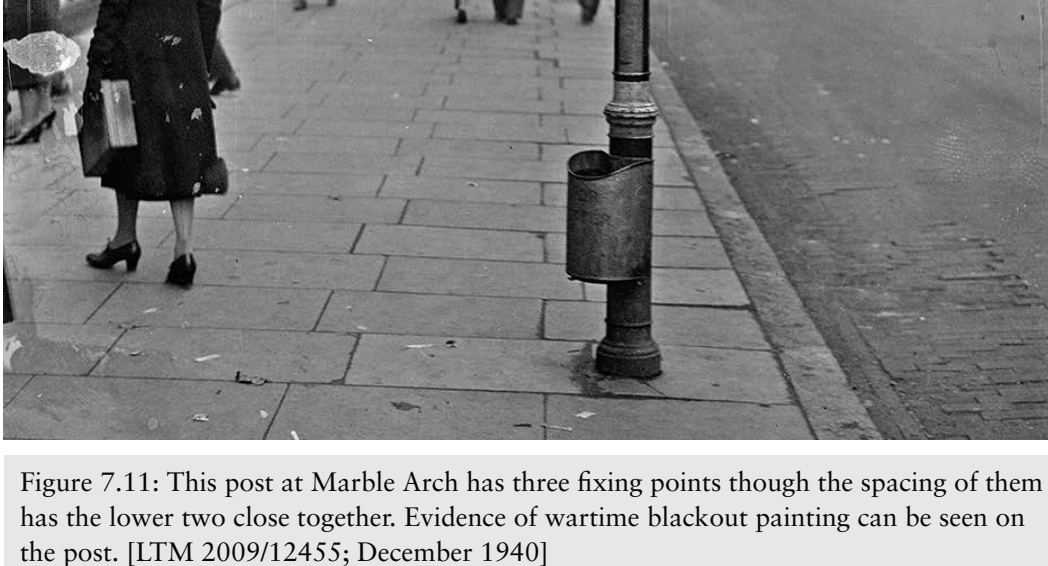


Figure 7.12: Seen in Knightsbridge, a bronze frame with space for nine route numbers and a separate 'queue' frame. The fittings are the same as the photograph above, though an information frame is also present; litter bins were integral on some posts. [LTM 1998/52349; May 1938]



Figure 7.13: 'Rare' is an over-used word, but these single height horizontal split half flags were not that common. This combination of Bus Compulsory and Coach Request was in front of the fire station in Welwyn Garden City in the LT Country Area. [LTM 1998/72915; November 1951]



Figure 7.14: Taller bronze frame flags were fitted to suit OSCPs. This one was opposite St. Margaret's station, Twickenham; site number illegible; 8th July 1940.



Figure 7.15: Described as a 'G' type bus stop flag' on a Birmingham Guild post, these were still bronze framed but taller than standard to suit the fixings on the post. The date given is 16th December 1940 at an unspecified location. Again, wartime blackout painting is in evidence. [LTM 1998/52502]

8. Terrazzo Concrete Posts

The Minutes of the Engineering Committee Meeting No.94 held on 6th September 1935 record:

The following Special Expenditure Requisition was submitted for the approval and the signature of the Vice Chairman: K57 for the supply and erection of 200 standard concrete bus stop posts and flags in accordance with the Building Superintendent's estimate date 23 August 1935, at a cost of £1030, the work to be executed by the Civil Engineer and completed by 30 November 1935. This was approved to be charged to Extraordinary Expenses Reserve Account. The design of new posts to be submitted at the earliest possible date.

It is reasonable to infer from this that there was a dissatisfaction with the OSCPs, despite the order to install 200 more.

From 1937 or 1938 a slightly curved square section post was introduced, designed by Christian Barman, industrial designer and at the time Publicity Officer at London Transport. Known as Terrazzo Concrete Posts (TCP), these were the first to have information cases integral – two in fact, each 36 inches tall. Before then information cases, if fitted at all, varied in size and height from the ground.

As can be calculated from the four drawings below, the overall height of the post was 11ft 8ins, excluding the finials. Instead of four fixing points of greater external circumference on earlier posts designs, with holes through them, these new TCPs had four holes drilled through the upright for the flag frame bolts. The integral concrete information cases were finished on their front face with a wooden surround a bit like a picture frame.

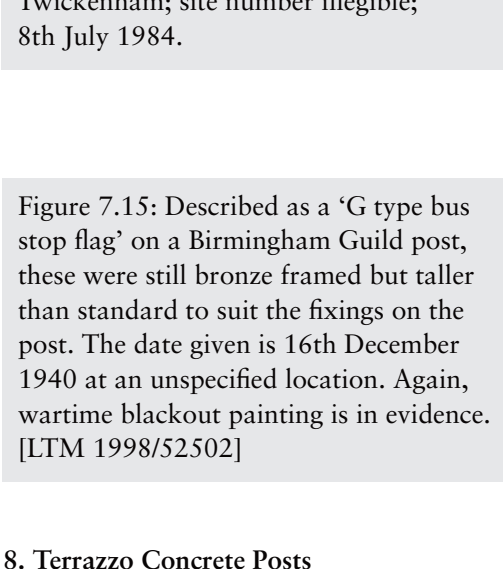


Figure 8.1: Dimension drawing of a TCP, with a theoretical and inappropriate combination of Compulsory flag, finials and nine route number frame. [LTM 1998/52361; 1937]



Figure 8.2: Dimension drawing of a TCP, with an inappropriate combination of Request flag, finials, nine route number frame, and separate site location frame. [LTM 1998/52362; 1937]

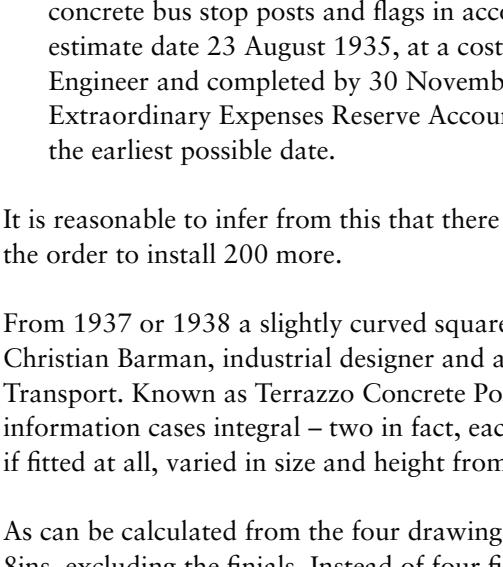


Figure 8.3: The four fixing holes can be seen here, used according to the requirement of the site. [LTM 1998/52363; 1937]

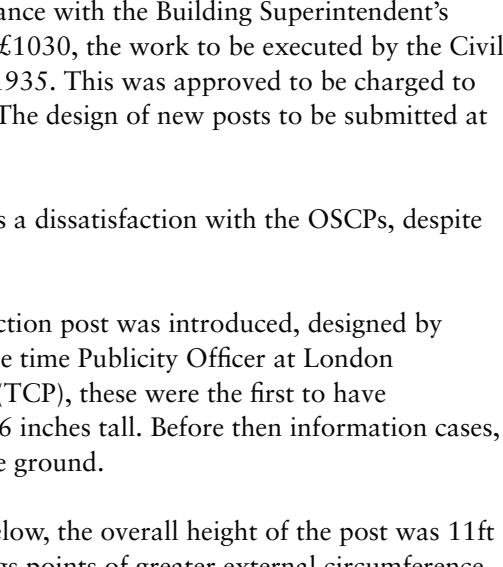


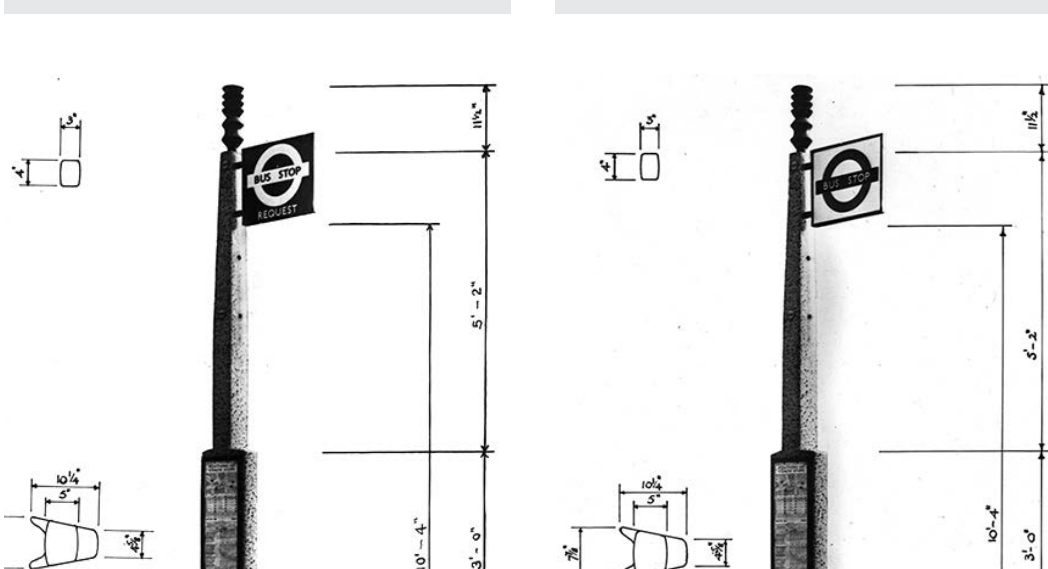
Figure 8.4: This drawing shows the location for a litter bin, when fixed. [LTM 1998/52364; 1937]

9. Terrazzo Concrete Post Finials

A novel feature of the TCPs was the finials fitted to the tops of most of them. Irrespective of a Central Area or Country Area location, red or green bus routes had the same bus stop flags – either Compulsory or Request.

At the time of the introduction of the TCPs, flags were still of two flat rectangular vitreous enamel plates, back-to-back, in a bronze frame, as depicted in the drawings above. The later style of flag from 1950 (more of which below) were routinely fitted to the same TCPs.

The finials on TCPs were of two types, circular if seen from above and colloquially called 'cotton reels'. One with two vertical ribs was always red and a four-rib version always green. Both types were of similar in height. The green ones were always above the red ones when paired and, depending on the routes serving, either a single red, a single green or a stacked pair were fitted. The red ones indicated a bus service, Central or Country Area, and a green one indicated Green Line coaches would serve. Whether these finials were intended for drivers, passengers, or simply decoration, I cannot say.



Figures 9.1 and 9.2: These two dimension drawings from 1961 specify the finials as made from porcelain. [courtesy of the estate of Mike Horne]

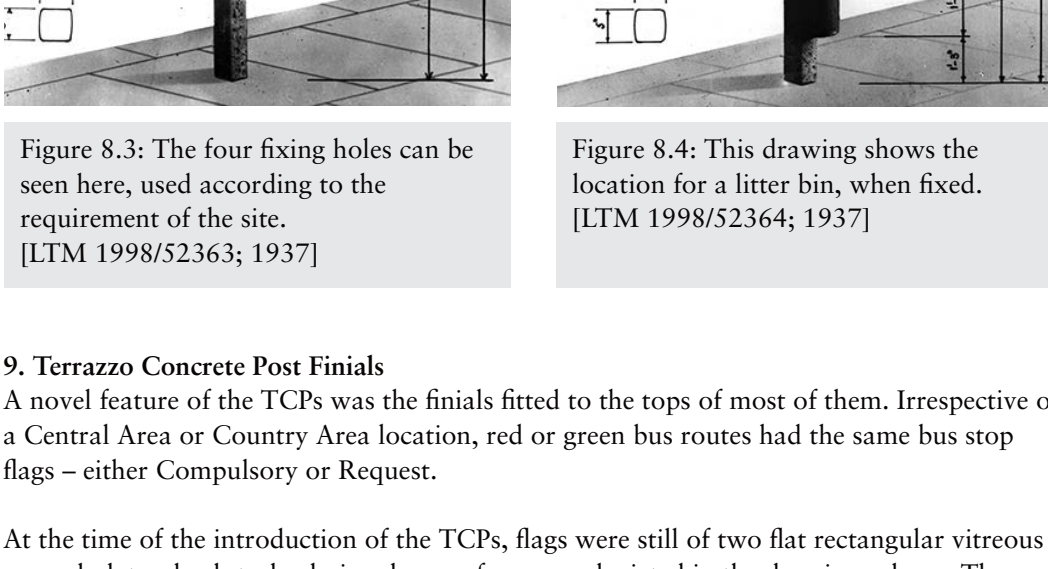


Figure 9.2: This drawing shows the location for a litter bin, when fixed. [LTM 1998/52364; 1937]

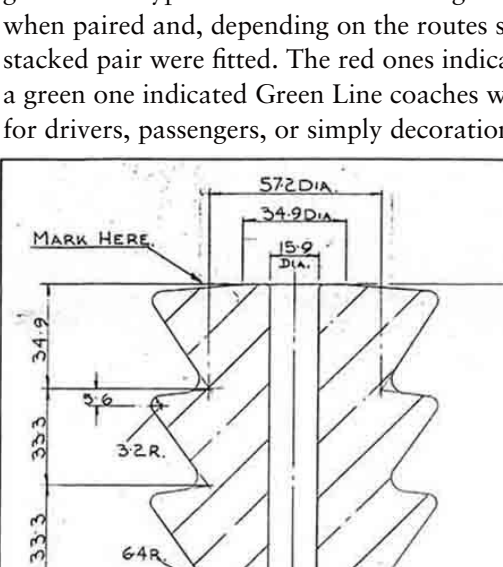


Figure 8.3: The four fixing holes can be seen here, used according to the requirement of the site. [LTM 1998/52363; 1937]

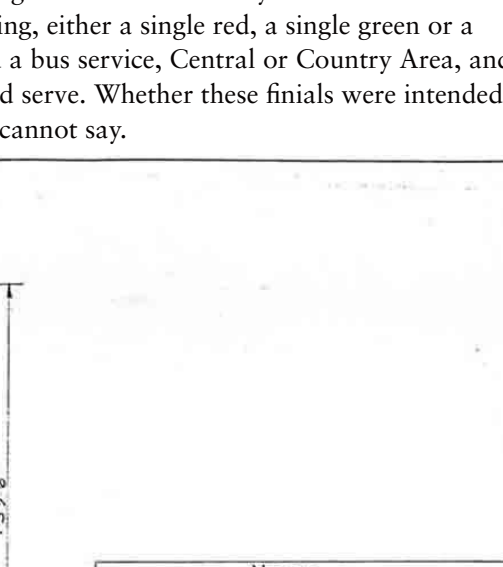
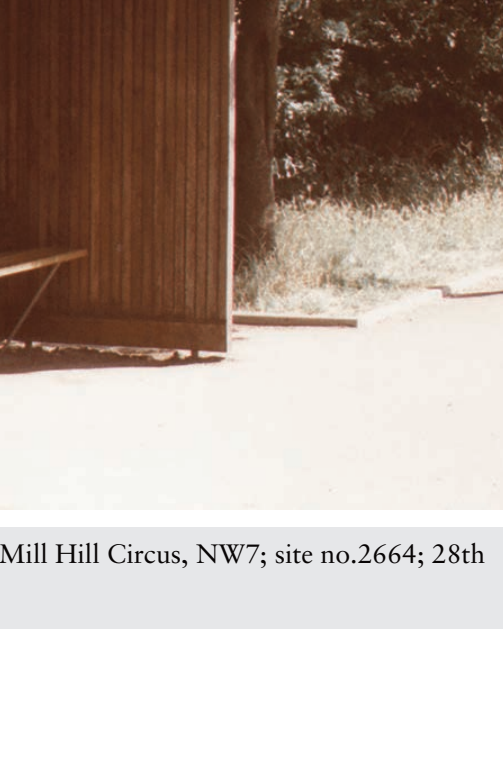
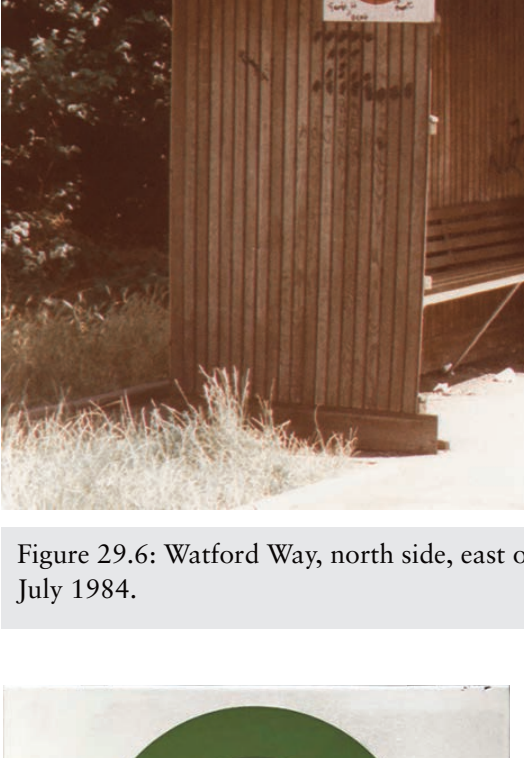


Figure 8.4: This drawing shows the location for a litter bin, when fixed. [LTM 1998/52364; 1937]



Figures 29.1, 29.2 and 29.3: Bell Lane at junction with Brent Street, NW4; 4th May 1985.



Figures 29.4 and 29.5: Beech Hill, Hadley Wood, EN4; 21st October 1984.



Figure 29.6: Watford Way, north side, east of Mill Hill Circus, NW7; site no.2664; 28th July 1984.



Figure 29.7: The green circle indicates this flag was for a Green Line stop – presumed removed from a shelter. [sales catalogue, date not known]



Figures 29.8 and 29.9: These two flat plates each measure 14x15 3/4ins, and so are smaller than a self cleaning flag. The presence of holes suggests they were screwed to a wall or, more likely, the side of a shelter. [private collection]

30. Portable Bus Stops

There are several reasons why a temporary bus stop location might be needed and a range of portable slender poles with a round flag in a retaining ring and weighed down with a concrete base were used. The metal poles seem to have varied a bit in height though it is probably not of any consequence. The flags were usually to the same designs as their contemporary rectangular ones. There were also some that had rectangular plates strapped to the poles.



Figure 30.1: The concrete base has understandably been beefed up for this rather impressive portable stop. [photographer and date not known]



Figure 30.2: Looking a bit like a police identity parade, these are part of the LT Museum's collection, held at its store at Acton; 24th January 2023.

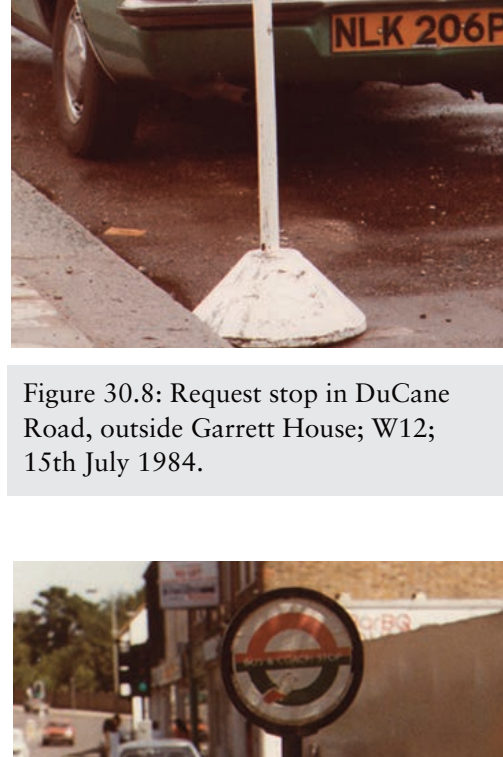


Figure 30.3: There were other designs of these circular flags for portable poles. The circles were 9-inch diameter and the outer frame 1ft 1ins.

Figure 30.4: Also at the LT Museum's store at Acton is this triangular plastic fabrication, showing the front and rear and made by Trueform Engineering; 24th January 2023.



Figures 30.5 and 30.6: Two different designs of Compulsory stop. left: Finsbury Square, Moorgate, EC2; 12th August 1984; right: Cromwell Road, outside Baden Powell House, SW7; 13th July 1984.

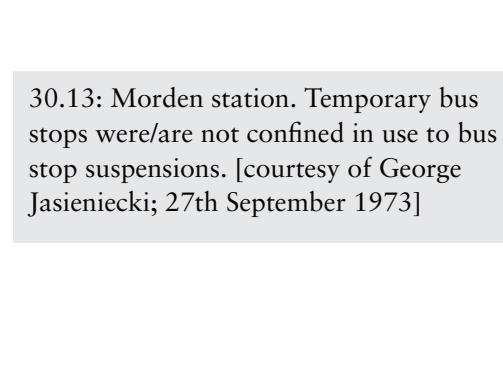
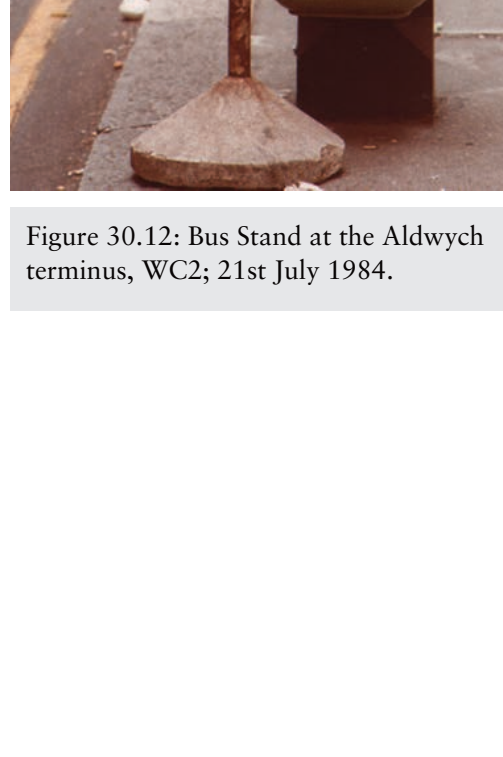


Figure 30.9: Bus Stand at Parliament Hill Fields, at junction of St. Albans Road and Highgate Road, NW5; 6th July 1984.

Figure 30.10: Combined Bus/Coach Compulsory stop; The Broadway, at the junction with Glebe Road, Stanmore, HA7; 28th July 1984.

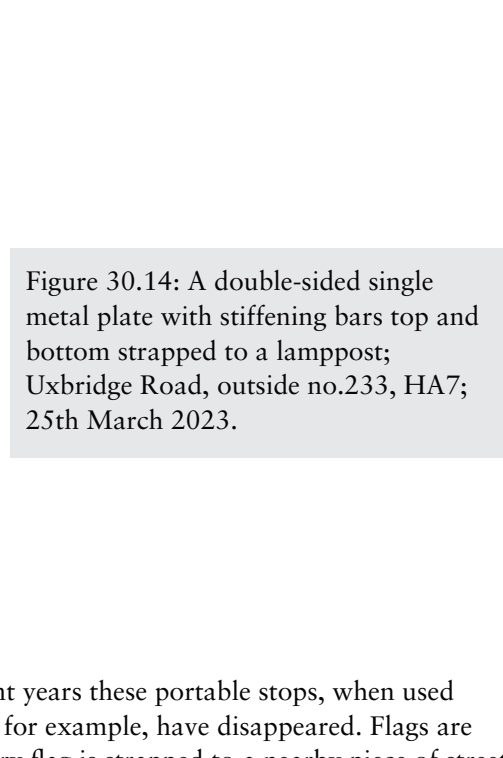


Figure 30.11: Bus Stand at the Aldwych terminus, WC2; 21st July 1984.

Figure 30.12: Bus Stand at the Aldwych terminus, WC2; 21st July 1984.



30.13: Morden station. Temporary bus stops were not confined in use to bus stop supervisors. [courtesy of George Jasieniecki; 27th September 1973]



Figure 30.14: A double-sided single metal plate with stiffening bars top and bottom strapped to a lamp post; Uxbridge Road, outside no.233, HA7; 25th March 2023.

It is perhaps pertinent to comment that in recent years these portable stops, when used when a bus stop was suspended for roadworks for example, have disappeared. Flags are now usually covered over and either a temporary flag is strapped to a nearby piece of street furniture or passengers are invited to walk to the next stop.

31. And Some Flags That Are Neither Standard Bus Stops, nor Bus Stops at All

There were, and still are, many similar signs that are not for bus passengers, and others that are for them but are not flags, such as at bus stations and approved turning points. The set of photographs that follows is nowhere near comprehensive but just those I happened to have photographed or acquired, and are included purely for interest.

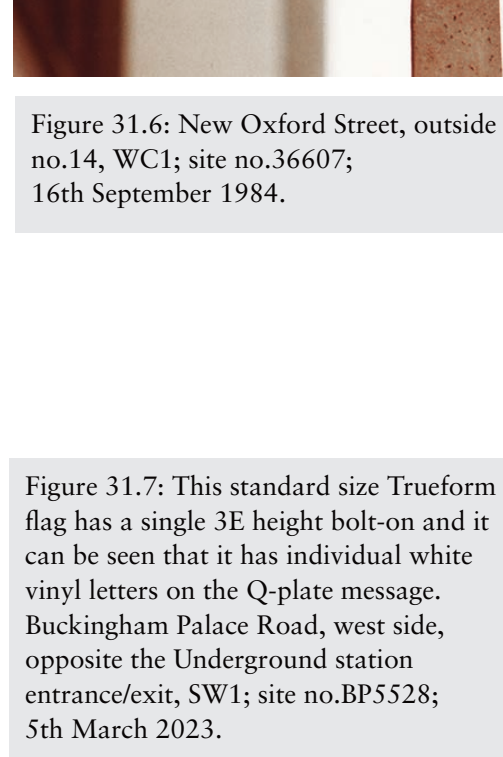
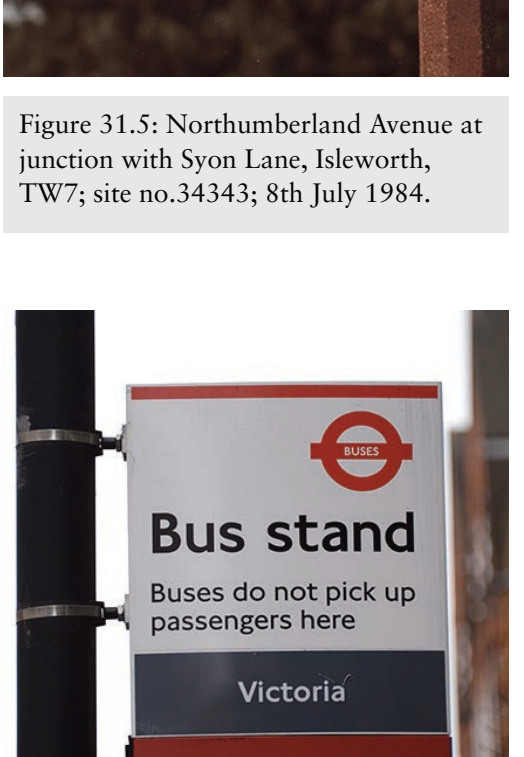


Figure 31.1: [courtesy of George Jasieniecki]; September 1973.

Figure 31.2: The LT Museum caption dates this as circa 1936. [LTM 1983/212]

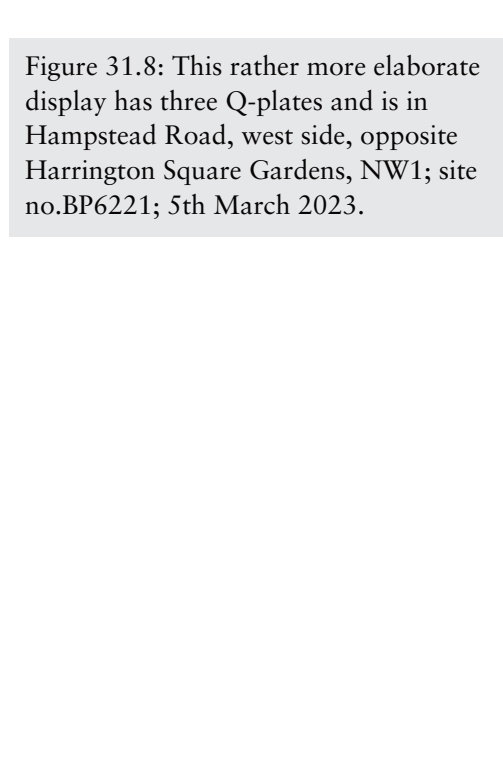


Figure 31.3: Finchley Road, Golders Green bus station at old trolleybus turning bay, NW11; 18th August 1984.

Figure 31.4: Finchley Road, Golders Green bus station at old trolleybus turning bay, NW11; 18th August 1984.



Figure 31.5: Northumberland Avenue at junction with Syon Lane, Isleworth, TW7; site no.34343; 8th July 1984.

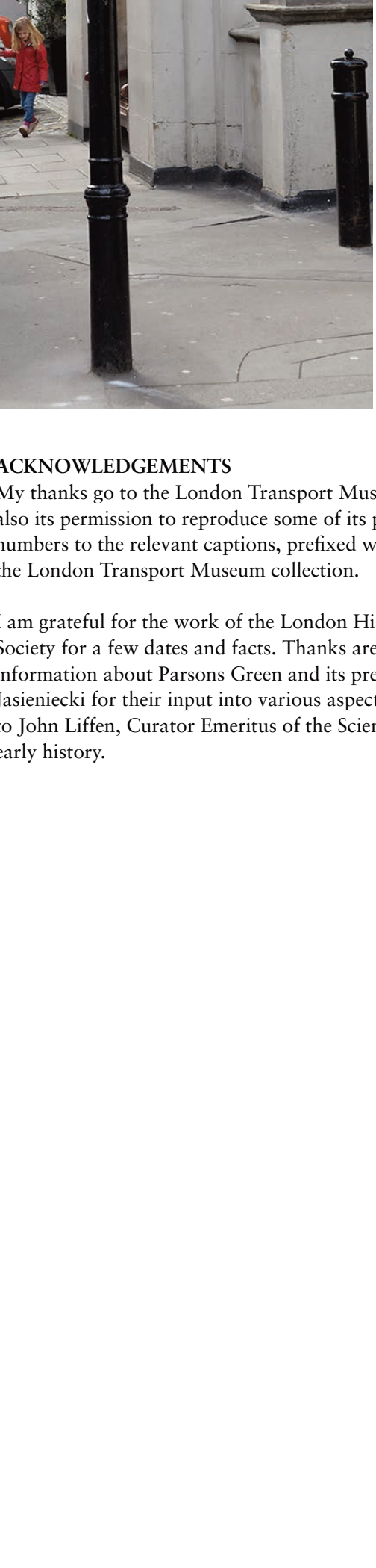
Figure 31.6: New Oxford Street, outside no.14, WC1; site no.36607; 16th September 1984.

Figure 31.7: This standard size Trueform flag has a single 3E height bolt-on and it can be seen that it has individual white vinyl letters on the Q-plate message. Buckingham Palace Road, west side, opposite the Underground station entrance/exit, SW 1; site no.BP5528; 5th March 2023.

Figure 31.8: This rather more elaborate display has three Q-plates and is in Hampstead Road, west side, opposite Harrington Square Gardens, NW1; site no.BP6221; 5th March 2023.



Figure 31.9: And finally, one that is definitely not a bus stop. Hail & Ride sections often have a dwarf post with timetables fitted. It is not uncommon to see passengers waiting patiently at these structures, though it is completely unnecessary. Courthouse Gardens, west side, at the junction with Nethercourt Avenue, N12; [courtesy of John McCurdy] 7th March 2023.



31.10: And really finally, here is a Birmingham Guild post that was re-located here many years ago for the then heritage bus route 100. Subsequently withdrawn and abandoned, the post gained a current Trueform flag with a vinyl added converting it into a direction sign in early 2022. Wellington Street, WC2; 11th March 2023.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks go to the London Transport Museum for access to its collection at Acton and also its permission to reproduce some of its photographs. I have appended their inventory numbers to the relevant captions, prefixed with the initials LTM. These are all: © TFL from the London Transport Museum collection.

I am grateful for the work of the London Historical Research Group of The Omnibus Society for a few dates and facts. Thanks are also due to Steve Smith and Clive Greedus for information about Parsons Green and its predecessors, to Ian Dyckhoff and to George Jasieniecki for their input into various aspects of this essay. Particular thanks are extended to John Liffen, Curator Emeritus of the Science Museum, for his time and help with the early history.