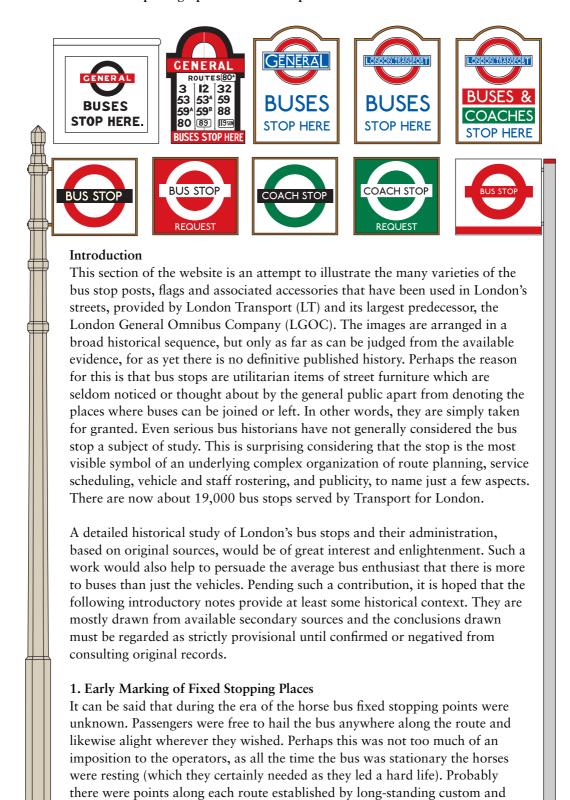
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LONDON BUS STOP

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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

practice where the buses always halted. The widespread introduction of motor

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.



introduction.

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 11 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 Passengers. 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, shelters 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 early 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 need of 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 Reinvention 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 3.6: The LT Museum caption says it was installed at Covent Garden 1900-1945. The caption also says "the design was first introduced in 1924" and neither is right – though it is a rather splendid photograph. This post and flag are on display at the LT Museum at Covent Garden. [LTM 1982/62 part 0] 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:]





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 3¹/₂ 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 four. The lower part of the post was of a larger 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 wartime blackout, with sections picked out, 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 OSCPs 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.

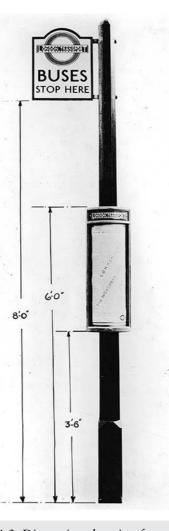


Figure 4.3: Dimension drawing for a Country Concrete Post, which sadly leaves us none the wiser as to the overall height, though it can probably be calculated with little difficulty. [1998/54905; February 1935]

5. London Transport is Born



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

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) continued to display General for quite a few years but 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 fleetname 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 letter. 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 beautiful 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 Schleger (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 bronze 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]

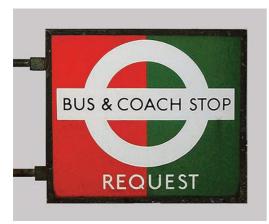


Figure 7.3: A split Bus & Coach Request flag. [photographer and date not known]

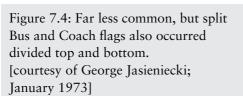




Figure 7.2: A single bronze frame with an integral horizontal divider showing the bolt fixings for the post. The pairing is of a Bus Request and a Coach Request. In practice any combination of flag types could be paired, though the slender photographic record suggests 'bus' was always at the top. [LTM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







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 Schleger Compulsory flag 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 1984.

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 fixings 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.

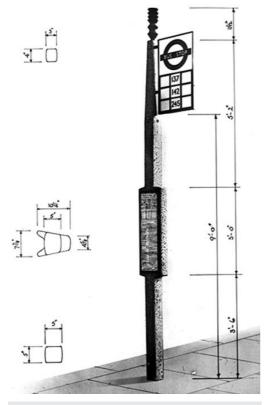


Figure 8.1: Dimension drawing of a TCP, with a theoretical and inappropriate combination of Compulsory flag, finials and nine route number frame. [LTM 1998/52361; 1937]

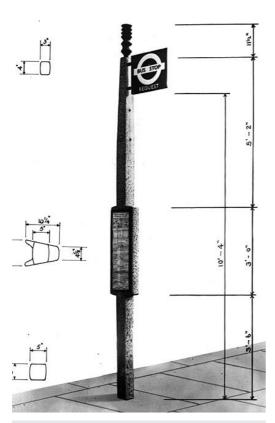


Figure 8.3: The four fixing holes can be seen here, used according to the requirement of the site. [LTM 1998/52363; 1937]

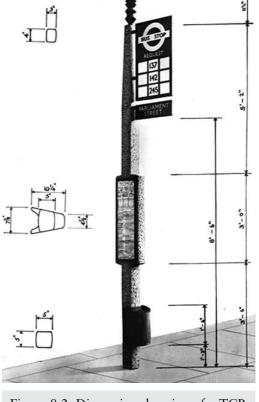


Figure 8.2: Dimension drawing of a TCP, with an inappropriate combination of Request flag, finials, nine route number frame, and separate site location frame. [LTM 1998/52362; 1937]

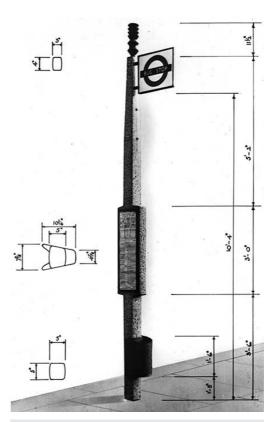


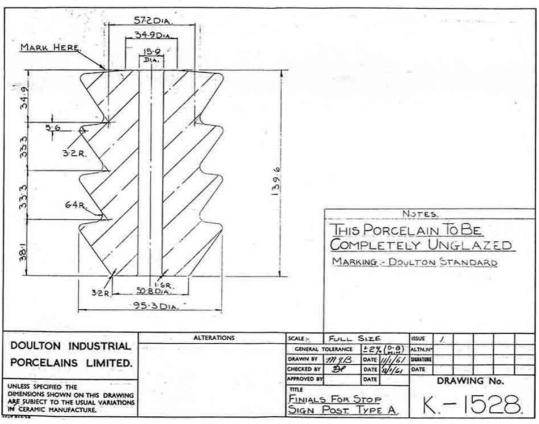
Figure 8.4: This drawing shows the location for a litter bin, when fixed. [LTM 1998/52364; 1937]

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 aways 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]

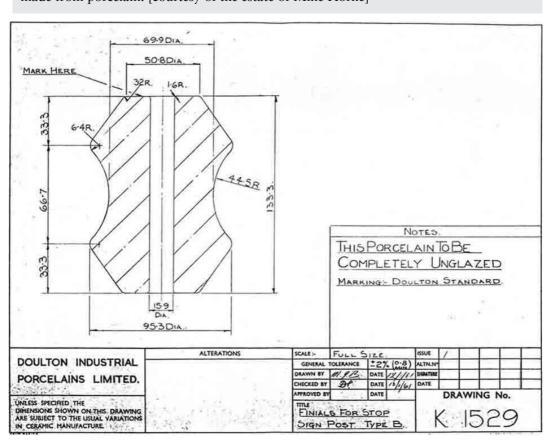






Figure 9.4: A Bus 2-ribbed finial used in both Central and Country Areas on TCPs. Finchley Road, west side, south of Henlys Corner, NW11; site no.6095; 7th July 1984.



Figure 9.3: By the 1980s bronze framed flags had become quite a rarity. This survivor shows a Bus 2-ribbed finial in King's Cross Road, outside the London Ryan hotel, WC1; site no.8378; 29th July 1984.

All the examples below are to show the various TCP finials, though all the flags are of the later design from 1950.



Figure 9.5: A Coach 4-ribbed finial as used in both Central and Country Areas on TCPs. [courtesy of the estate of Mike Horne]

Figure 9.6: A stacked pair of finials at stops served by both buses and coaches. Site number missing; Great West Road, north side, west of Wood Lane TW7; 11th July 1984.

The impression given above is of an orderly and faultlessly implemented scheme. In truth there were many examples of wrong finials applied, certainly by the time I was taking an interest some decades later.





Figures 9.7 and 9.8: Just a couple of examples from the rogues gallery. In fairness, Green Lines were no longer LT's responsibility after 1970 and these photographs were taken a few years after that, though the 183 was still an LT service. [courtesy of the estate of Mike Horne]

10. Intermediate Type Post and the Revised Terrazzo Concrete Post Designed in 1950, a new concrete post was subsequently introduced for more lightly used stops. Still with a timetable panel integral to the upright, these only had one 36-inch timetable panel, parallel to the kerb, facing away from the road of course. These were called Intermediate Type Posts (ITP) and the concrete composition used had a slightly pinkish hue. The designer of this post has yet to be discovered.

As can be calculated from the two drawings below, the overall height of the new ITP was 11ft 8ins – *including* the finial, the height of which is not indicated. The measurements of the revised TCP add up to 11ft 4ins, *excluding* the finial, and so 4ins shorter than the 1937 variant.

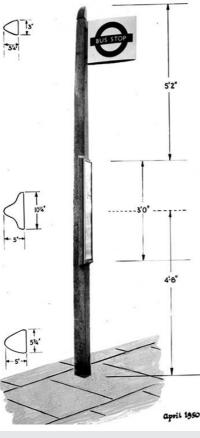
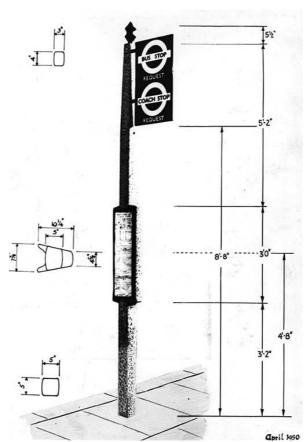


Figure 10.1: Dimension drawing of an ITP, equipped with a Compulsory flag of a 'self cleaning' design not yet in use. These posts were slightly less tall than the 1937 TCPs as they would not require two flags stacked. [LTM 1998/52392; April 1950]



10.2: This drawing of a revised TCP dates from the same time as the new ITP. It shows two stacked bronze frame flags still current but soon to be superseded. I am speculating but wonder if the reduction in post height was in anticipation of the phasing out of stacked flags in favour of single split service provision ones. [LTM 1998/52391; 4th May 1950]

The ITP had three fixing holes and the TCP four. That said, and difficult to access, the LT Museum store at Acton has a TCP of the expected post shape and with two information frames but with five fixing holes, and also an ITP post with four fixing holes and two

Figure 10.3: A rather fine example of an ITP sporting one of the new 'self cleaning' flags (see below about the latter). [probably LTM but inventory number and date not known]





Figure 10.4: This resplendent view of a revised TCP was taken at Westway (in far more serene days) in the Shepherds Bush area in September 1937. The top of the post has a red, two-ribbed, finial, denoting this is a stop for Buses and not Coaches. To the right of the information case, the angled rear of the opposing one may just be seen. The white disk at the top of the post displays the site number. [LTM 1998/86333]



Figure 10.5: The precise same location on the same day. The same post has now been equipped with a Coach Request (Green Line) flag and a four-ribbed green finial, in this pair of posed photographs. [LTM 1998/33101]

11. Intermediate Type Post Finials

The ITPs by their very nature were at locations with lesser demand, with just one flag, and so only needed a single finial. A bird's eye view of these posts showed them to have a flat passenger-facing vertical with a horizontally curved rear coming to a gentle point facing the kerb. The rear also curved gently vertically. The finials therefore followed this shape but were also brought to a gentle vertical point at the top. They were commonly red, with green

ones only occurring where only Green Line coaches stopped. Examples of these not applied correctly were not unusual. The information case had a 'picture frame' wooden surround, the same as on the TCPs.



11.1: A Bus finial used on both Central Area and Country Area ITPs. Holders Hill Road, outside no.8, NW7; site no.15615; 28th July 1984.



Figure 11.2: A Coach finial used on both Central Area and Country Area ITPs. [photographer, site and date not known]

Figure 11.3: The finial system broke down in examples like this, as this type could only display one colour. [courtesy of George Jasieniecki; location and date not known]



12. Site Numbers

Site numbers were applied in a few different positions on early flags and posts. The self cleaning design (see below) always had/have them beneath the flag.



Figures 12.1, 12.2, 12.3 and 12.4: There has been more than one site numbering system over the years. The yellow label is nothing to do with the bus stop location numbering, but for LT passenger surveys.



13. The Hollow 'Self Cleaning' Flags





One of the drawbacks of the bronze frames, the same as with picture frames, was that they accumulated dirt on the unavoidable ledge, and also sometimes caused corrosion as a result. A new design of flag appeared, it seems at the same time as the TCP and revised ITP described above, from 1950. These were described as 'self cleaning', presumably because they had no frame to attract the daily grime. They were of a hollow vitreous enamel three-dimensional fabrication vaguely reminiscent of a boat in plan.

The manufacturing techniques of the time dictated that the letters were created individually. As such, inevitably, it is easy to spot differences in things like letter spacing, as the flags were produced over a very long period of time.

The examples below represent the early generation of Compulsory, Request and Coach. Other than the size of the bar & circle to suit the self cleaning design, these were very similar to those fitted within the preceding bronze frames.



Figure 13.1: Compulsory bus: outside no.8 Holders Hill Road NW7; site no.15615; 28th July 1984.



Figure 13.3: Compulsory coach (wrong finial); Edgware Road, south of Station Road Edgware, HA8; site no.14800;



Figure 13.2: Request bus: Alexandra Grove, N12, outside Vivian Court; site no.34202; 28th July 1984.



Figure 13.4: Request coach; Kensington Gore opposite Jay Mews, SW7; site no.3351; 13th July 1984.

15th July 1984.



Figure 13.5: Compulsory bus Compulsory coach; Great Portland Street, outside nos.215-227; site 8287; 7th July 1984.



Figure 13.7: Request bus Compulsory coach. High Street Edgware, outside no.113, HA8; site number illegible; 28th July 1984.



Figure 13.6: Compulsory bus Request coach; Victoria Embankment, east of Temple station, EC4; site no.25490; 21st July 1984.



Figure 13.8: Request bus Request coach. Great West Road, west of Wood Lane, TW7; site number missing; 11th July 1984.

It is interesting to note that there was felt the need to state 'Compulsory' on the split flags where presumably it was thought understood without it on the single facility ones.

14. The Red Arrows

In April 1966 the first of what would be a small central London 'Red Arrow' network of high capacity, limited stop single-deck buses was introduced. These had bespoke publicity and often, but not always, had their own bus stops. The arrow on both sides always pointed towards the post.



Figure 14.1: This later Red Arrow Compulsory flag, dating from between 1968 and 1972, was screen printed over a white base. [LTM 1993/207]



Figure 14.2: A Red Arrow Request flag. [courtesy of George Jasieniecki; November 1972]



Figure 14.3: A combined bus and Red Arrow Request flag. The Red Arrow bar & circle did not lend itself to a left-right split. [courtesy of George Jasieniecki; November 1972]



Figure 14.4: A combined bus and Red Arrow Compulsory flag. [private collection]

Interlude

As noted above, finding a meaningful way of portraying London's bus stop furniture is difficult. Developments of different aspects do not sit easily within a straightforward chronology. I will diverge at this point to look at some features that spanned post and flag evolution and return to the story later on.

15. E-Plates

Referring back to some photographs at the very start of this piece, it may be seen that route numbers were often displayed either on the flag or in a frame on the post. For some time these numbers were signwritten (painted) onto wooden boards. When the application got a bit more sophisticated, as in the bronze frame designs, a grid was formed to give some visual order and flexibility to the display.



Figure 15.1: Close inspection of the route number frame suggests that the grid was a single fabrication of horizontals and verticals. It would appear that outside the left- and righthand verticals of the grid, the structure extended with a ridged protrusion that slid inside the outer verticals of the main bronze frame. This is a similar arrangement to the Q-plates that were fitted to the 'self cleaning flags of the future. The effect caused the grid to push forward of the flag plate, leaving a void into which the route number inserts could be dropped. [LTM 1998/52349; May 1938]

E-plates were individual enamelled tiles that could drop between a pair of vertical sliders on both sides of the flag. Later bronze framed flags had E-plate holders.



Figure 15.2: A pair of bronze framed flags with integral three E-plate sliders. [sales stall].

Figure 15.3: This taller bronze frame and enamel insert could take nine E-plates. [courtesy of George Jasieniecki; January 1973]



The 'self cleaning' flags could also carry E-plates. The system of manufacture of these was well thought out and economical. Depending on location and usage, flags could carry no E-plates, or three, six or nine, and very seldom more. Flags were constructed either as a plain flag, or with sliders for one integral horizontal row to take three plates. A separate add on comprised two rows to take six plates in total. From these three components it was possible to equip a flag in four configurations.

The advantages of E-plates over painted boards are obvious when routes serving a particular stop change, and in themselves created a storage system based at LT's works at Parsons Green. As will be seen farther on, though E-plates are still used, on the design of flags in use from the 1990s plain white plates now have a vinyl sticker of the route number adhered individually, instead of the various black, and occasionally colours, integral to the enamelling process. They are also differently constructed.



Figure 15.5: A self cleaning flag with integral 3E-plate fitting. [sales catalogue]

Figure 15.4: It would seem that some Request flags were completely red, though I wouldn't want to guess how common they were or if this was just an error.

[courtesy of George Jasieniecki; January 1973]



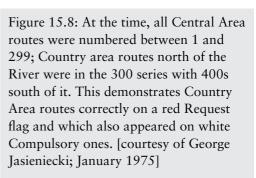
Figure 15.6: This flag does not have an E-plate fitting but has a 6E-plate accessory bolted to its underside. High Street Edgware, outside no.113, HA8; site number illegible; 28th July 1984.



BUS & COACH STOP

Figure 15.7: This 3E-plate flag has a 6Eplate accessory bolted to its underside. For smooth insertion of the E-plates, single piece sliders are in place spanning the height of all three rows. London Bus Museum, Brooklands; 22nd October 2022.





16. Q-Plates

Q-Plates could also be displayed as 3-, 6- or 9-plate sizes; larger ones are also known but not common. A single Q-plate occupied the same width as three E-plates and were bowed forward to avoid the two middle vertical sliders. Though probably not called Q-plates, they had an early forebear, where they provided instructions as to which side of the flag passengers were encouraged to wait. That said, these plates carried all manner of other messages as well.



Figure 16.1: Seen here fitted to a Birmingham Guild post variant, a separate bronze frame contains the queue instruction. [1998/52339]; April 1935.



Figure 16.2: Fitted to a different Birmingham Guild post variant, a separate bronze frame contains the queue instruction. [1998/52342]; 26th February 1936.

Figure 16.3: Another Birmingham Guild post similar to the one above has a separate bronze frame containing the place name in February 1936. [1998/52341]



Figure 16.4: John Prince's Street, junction with Oxford Street, W1; site no.34847; 15th July 1984.



Figure 16.6: Great Portland Street, outside nos.224-228, W1; site no.8276; 7th July 1984.



Figure 16.8: High Road North Finchley, south of Christchurch Avenue, N12; site no.9899; 26th September 1984.

Figure 16.10: When the Red Arrows were introduced in 1966 only route 500 operated, though others followed from 1968 in the 500 series to form a discrete network. This photograph suggests a 3Eplate flag construction, though in truth these were a standard single flag with a 3E-plate add on with no sliders, but bonded to the underside of the flag. Brook Street, Mayfair, W1; photographer and date not known.





Figure 16.5: John Prince's Street, junction with Oxford Street, W1; site no.34847; 15th July 1984.



Figure 16.7: Great Portland Street, outside nos.224-228, W1; site no.8276; 7th July 1984.



Figure 16.9: Pursley Road opposite no.52, NW7; site no.25965; 28th July 1984.



Posts and flags have a long working life and it was common to see bronze framed and self cleaning flags used contemporaneously on posts of different vintages. Add to this the many accessories noted above, the combination of possibilities that existed over something like sixty years is incalculable. It is a testament to the design evolution that visual communication was not compromised.

17. Fare Stage Identities Annoyingly, I recall seeing a photograph of a very early flag that had the words Fare Stage, all in capitals and probably painted on along the bottom. I cannot track down any such pictures to show here, and therefore don't know when such markings for graduated fares were first displayed.

The London Historical Research Group records that they first appeared on Compulsory stops – though they were certainly also on Request stops, albeit probably later.

Though metal signs for Fare Stages were in place from at least 1937 [see figure 5.1], the widespread indication of Fare Stages during 1952 came as a consequence of an increase in London bus fares as from 2nd March 1952. Not only were the fares increased, but the distances separating Fare Stages shortened, thus making the increases even more unpalatable. [see *Buses Illustrated* No.10, April 1952].

The Central Transport Consultative Committee reported on 17th April the same year that the increases were fair, but also noted that if more extensive explanations and publicity had been provided, much of the public outcry could have been avoided. [see *The Times*, Friday 18th April 1952, page 4].



Figure 17.1: Here is evidence that Fare Stage markers were in place by 8th May 1945 and definitely earlier. Some bus stops were identified as Fare Stages by means of a plate attached underneath the flag – see figure 5.1. [Photographer and site not known, but reproduced in the newspaper simply named '*i*'; 8th May 2020]

The public outcry did however have an effect in London and a reduction in certain fares was announced by the British Transport Commission with effect from 31st August 1952. In addition these changes involved the restoration of Fare Stages that had been shortened back to conform to the national standard. [see *The Times*, Friday 15th August 1952, page 4].

It would also seem that LT took the hint from the Central Transport Consultative Committee and identified all bus Fare Stages across its network. *Buses Illustrated* No.12 for October 1952 reported that " 'Fare Stage' labels have been affixed to all relevant bus and coach stop signs." The use of paper labels, which could be quickly produced and applied, would allow an interim solution to be found in response to any concerns about the identification of fare stages, pending the design and manufacture of a more permanent type of sign. These turned out to be a small black disk fitted to the tops of the flag posts.

Figure 17.2: Fare Stage labels were stuck onto the flags in one corner. [photographer, site and date not known]





Figure 17.3 [photographer, site and date not known]

When introduced, the more permanent metal black disk markers were affixed to the tops of the posts. At the time these came into being there were still many Birmingham Guild, OSCP and CCP posts in use, as well as the (then) newer TCP and ITP. Where the 'self cleaning' flags were split bus/coach, the disk clarified which the Fare Stage disk referred to.



Figures 17.4 and 17.5: Left: opposite St. Margaret's station, TW7; site number illegible; 8th July 1984; Right: photographer, site and date not known.

Later fixings were a more prominent vertical red plate, also with white lettering. Fare Stages started to become redundant when fare zones were introduced in the late 1970s. It is however wrong to assume that, because a marker may be seen on posts of various times in the past, that they were on them when the posts were newly installed.



Figures 17.6 and 17.7: Fare Stage disks were superseded by a prominent vertical red plate. Again, where a Fare Stage only applied to one or the other of bus or coach, the plate clarified which. One is left to infer that the Fare Stage applied to both in the right-hand example.

Left: Great West Road, west of Wood Lane, TW7; site number missing; 11th July 1984; Right: High Street Edgware, outside no.113, HA8; site number illegible; 28th July 1984.

18. Where to Board Your Bus Lettered Disks

In the early 1950s posts around Hyde Park Corner were fitted with a red disk at the top and had a single white capital letter within them. These were at places where several bus route confluences occurred and where interchange from one route to another was close. Around these junctions the various bus stops nearby received a unique identifying letter; a map was provided in the case on the post showing the whole locality. An alphabetical index of places served from any of the bus stops in the area was appended to the map so passengers could look up where they wanted to go to, see at which stops their chosen route served, and walk to it. They might be lucky and already be at the right stop. These were called Where to Board Your Bus panels and continue today albeit in a rather different form all over London and usually on posters in the shelter.

Figure 17.8: The lettered disks could be fitted to any stopping arrangement of flag and were single letters. The letters 'I' and 'O' were not used so as to avoid confusion with figures 1 and 0. It was also not unusual for some letters to be omitted to allow for expansion of the locality at a later date. Double letters are now common. Bayswater Road, opposite Stanhope

Place W2; site no.189 (an early location to receive a bus stop); 11th July 1984.



After the introduction of these few schemes in central London, others followed, presumably because LT believed they were successful – I certainly do and have in fact implemented several at other large city centres in England, albeit in a more enhanced way.

They are widespread throughout London at the time of writing in 2023, though I believe they could function a lot better. The human condition of just copying what was done in the past without any real understanding of why it worked, and more importantly, how it worked, is stultifying.

Interlude Over

We can now return to some sort of chronology of events and how posts, flags and their accessories evolved.

19. Developments of the Bar & Circle

London Transport's 1959 'Standard Signs' manual, with the drawings from various dates in 1949, shows the different contents of single flag to be 1ft 3³/4ins tall and 1ft 6ins wide, though surprisingly does not state any colours. The July 1964 'Standard Signs' repeats these without alteration, other than the deletion of use for trolleybuses at both Compulsory and Request stops. The two relevant drawings are dated 1963. Trolleybuses did not have flags any different from those for motor buses, with which they often shared, the last ran in London in May 1962.

In 1972 London Transport started to use the bar & circle in various applications without anything stated on the bar. How soon this happened to bus stop flags I do not know. The 1979 'Design Manual' shows the flags to remain the sizes as before, though the bar got shorter the circle a touch thicker. The overall symbol, in my opinion, also got weakened with the removal of the words Bus Stop from the bar and positioned independently below it. Request stops were similarly altered to also have Bus Stop below the bar and the word Request, changed from black to red, placed upon it. I find this change of emphasis a little odd.



Figure 19.1: Compulsory stop in Lullington Garth, west of Chanctonbury Way, N12; site no.25044; 15th July 1984.



Figure 19.2: Request stop in East End Road, N3, outside no.114; site no.16505; 7th July 1984.

By this time Coach Stops were no longer needed. A National Bus Company (NBC) had been formed from 1st January 1969 and on the same date in 1970 one of its constituent subsidiaries, London Country Bus Services Ltd, came into existence. This acquired LT's Country Area bus routes and its Green Line coach network.

20. The Return of Named Bus Stops

At the time, London Transport's Advertising & Publicity department was responsible for most public facing information, such as maps, timetables, Where to Board panels and promotional material, for both buses and the Underground. The new head of the department, Nick Lewis, took over in the early 1980s and took a more marketing approach. An early initiative was to 'sell' bus routes and routes 15 and 23 were particularly targeted with stickers and route diagrams.



Figure 20.1 and 20.2: Edward Johnston's fine letterforms were being supplanted by the less elegant and slightly heavier New Johnston from 1980. As explained above, the vitreous enamelling process required lettering to be produced by skilled people who mostly interpreted Johnston's lettering well. By now photosetting had taken quite a hold and, though the letter shapes themselves were firmly fixed (a good thing), the spacing of them was in the hands of unskilled computer operators (a bad thing).

Perhaps because these locations were a trial, new flags were not manufactured and instead printed vinyls were stuck over existing ones. The New Johnston letters were too closely spaced (a bit of a fashion fad of the era) making clear reading from the distance more demanding. The addition of the tiny pictograms for British Rail and Underground were untidy and made some of us wish we could get a ladder and pick them off. Here we see a 3E-plate flag combined with a 6E-plate flag on a Terrazzo Concrete Post.

Euston Road, north side, outside King's Cross station, N1; site no.20826 (probably); 29th July 1984.

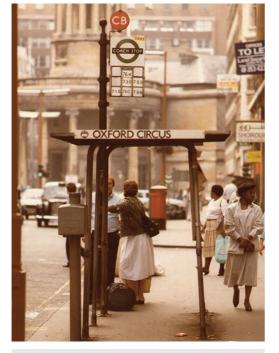


Figure 20.3: Though this stop was only served by Green Line coaches and not operated by London Transport from 1970, the shelter nevertheless got named as it was still part of the Where to Board Your Bus area at Oxford Circus.

A mixture of eras is seen here, with a Birmingham Guild post fitted with a self cleaning flag. The Where to Board letter is affixed by a metal bracket as it would have been impractical to fit it on top as on TCPs.

Regent Street, north of Margaret Street, W1; site no.23553; 26th July 1984.



Figure 20.4: Other areas trialled were Oxford Circus and Victoria.

In order to apply the location name to the bar the overall design was upset and the words Bus Stop displaced to below the bar & circle. The overly large place name for the bar on which it sits, and it being spaced too tightly, contradicts the learned wisdom of London Transport being paragons of design. The rot was beginning to set in.

John Prince's Street at junction with Great Castle Street, W1; site no.33071; 15th July 1984.

They say 'there is nothing new in design' and another 'idea' was to name bus stops in a few high profile central London areas, where they were added to the flags and shelters.

The practice of naming bus stop was eventually rolled out across the whole London, from memory this started around the turn of the century.

21. The Old Order Gets Disrupted

London Transport, and the LGOC before it, managed bus stop furniture from its civil engineering and buildings base at Parsons Green, probably from 1930, and Earls Court and Fulham before that.

An Act of Parliament of 1984 came into effect from 1st April 1985 creating a London Regional Transport (LRT), preparatory to bus operations being privatized. At the same time London Bus Services Ltd (LBSL) was formed, as a wholly owned subsidiary of LRT. One victim of this was the facility at Parsons Green which ceased the same year and also caused the loss of a lot of historical record material for ever.

For some time the London Transport bus network had been operated divisionally, though invisibly to the passengers. A more public image was created in late 1979 with eight 'bus districts', soon reduced to seven. As a result of the privatization it all disappeared and several newly formed bus companies emerged, some as local area management by-outs. For a time bus stop management was devolved to the new individual bus companies but, sensibly, returned to the centralized control of LBSL in 1991.

Understandably, all the posts described above could have long lives - well anyway those that avoided being involved in vehicle collisions. Though many of the earlier ones had gradually been replaced, even as far back as the Birmingham Guild posts, several were still in use.

22. The Effects of Bus Deregulation and Privatization

As referred to above, with the planned sell off of all individual NBC subsidiaries in the UK, government transferred the administration of all networks to local authorities. The existing major city Passenger Transport Executives which had acted both as licensors and bus operators (a bit like London Transport) were each also to be broken in two to become the local authority for their territory, and separately, with the day-to-day bus operations to be privatized. Bus services would be deregulated and only be provided if the new bus companies felt they could make money from them; the local authorities would decide to fill in the (many) gaps by tendering socially necessary but not commercially viable routes. This created many complexities that passengers still endure to this day.

It was inevitable that busy routes and city centres would attract a lot of competition when deregulation commenced on 26th October 1986. One can only imagine that government foresaw the chaotic traffic jams that became a reality in most major cities and didn't have the nerve to impose this free-for-all on London. (Readers are invited to make what they will of this Thatcherite tactic).

As noted above, pre-emptory to this, LRT had come into being and LBSL would be the 'local authority' for London. Day-to-day bus operations were however sold off to private companies with all route operations tendered to the new private companies by LBSL.

Outside the capital some local authorities took possession of bus stops and in other areas the operators did – in some areas both occurred, causing all sorts of confusion. During this national turmoil London's bus stop posts and flags quietly got on minding their own business and doing their job.

Figure 22.1: Taken from an auction catalogue, the description says the upper flag is 1980s style and the lower one from the early 1990s. (Note: catalogue descriptions may not be reliable.)



23. The Publicity Divide

London Underground Ltd (LUL) also came into being in 1985, also owned by LRT, but not privatized. That financial debacle was to come later. Oddly, LRT remained the provider of publicity and information for LUL though LBSL set up its own department.

In the early 1990s LBSL flexed its muscles and appointed the internationally renowned design company, Fitch, to carry out a wide-ranging review of all its public facing information. Fitch had a rather plush office in King's Cross (and other places) and I was invited to a meeting with them to discuss bus maps. Not many designers get excited about public transport but the two people I met, Graham Rhodda and Elaine Chambers, were very much the exception. Their approach impressed me greatly, and I am not known for saying that about many in our industry.

Graham and Elaine made it very clear that they would only make recommendations on products required, and the form they should take, when they had understood the network, its operation and perception from the passengers' point of view. Blimey. They then spent quite a lot of time travelling all over the place by bus. We then worked together closely for several years and quickly became like-minded friends. It was Graham and Elaine who were responsible for the new style of flags that started to appear after this review, though I had nothing to do with their design at all.

24. The Fitch Flags

Despite the huge respect I have for Graham and Elaine's work, I was not particularly in favour of the emphasis of the new flags, though that was not part of my remit in this very large project that ran for many years.

Compulsory and Request stops were still identified separately, though of course the Coach variants were long since a relevant memory. Fare Stage identities were also no longer required, though the Where to Board (WTB) letters very much still were. (It should be noted that the name of the these bus stop panels had been changed to the somewhat pallypally 'Where to Catch Your Bus' in Nick Lewis days.)

I was saddened by the retention of the blank bar & circle, though the words Bus Stop now had their own space, somewhat too small in my opinion, on a separate red strip below. (This red strip was applied, usually at the top, to a range of printed matter.) On the plus side, the flags now had a more prominent grey bar, the same area as one Q-plate, displaying the name of the stop. Earlier naming of stops was less specific, where all stops in the same WTB locality displayed the same one. With all bus stops to be named, not just those at WTB areas, most opposing pairs of stops along the road had their own identity, with some being unique where there wasn't a reciprocal pair.

A new and very worthwhile addition was a further Q-plate sized panel which displayed the direction of travel in the form of a nearby area name to come. This provided the equivalent facility to finding the right direction of travel platform on the train.



Figure 24.1: A Fitch design of Compulsory flag in its most basic and original form, with well thought-through colour contrast panels for ease of reading. The stop name is on a grey panel and the direction of travel on a white background. This is the equivalent of a previous style 3E-plate flag, again as a modular fabrication.

Summers Lane, south side, west of Sunny Way, N12; site no.BP5760; 28th January 2023.

25. The Trueform Posts and Flags



Figure 24.2: A Fitch design of Request flag in its most basic and original form. Both this one and the Compulsory flag to the left are on a post in its basic form, with a plain red cap on the post and no lettered disk. The posts were/are capable of supporting a WTB identity letter above the red cap.

Engel Park, north side, south of Bittacy Hill, NW7; site no.25970; 30th January 2023.

From 1997 (I am told) the wholesale replacement of posts and flags commenced with manufacture and installation by Trueform Engineering of Hayes, Middlesex. With minor amendments to their appearance and structure, these are still in use today, though again there are a variants according to site location and potential service level.

The basic flag incorporates the height of one Q-plate as standard. A pair of separate addons are used, one the height of two Q-plates and one the height of three. This allows a range of display combinations as on earlier designs. The E-plates were re-designed in-house at TfL to be fixed without the use of the vertical sliders, though they have vinyls applied individually on plain white vitreous enamel 'tiles'.

To clarify the fabrications described below, one Q-plate is the same width and height as 3Eplates. All flags now have the stop name as white lettering on a grey strip the same size as one Q-plate. Below that, and always in place, there is the onward direction strip with black lettering on a white background, also the same size as one Q-plate. Whereas not all earlier flags had E-plates, all current flags do. What this amounts to is that, in old terminology, the most basic current flag is equivalent in height to the previous one with nine E-plates. The overall height, excluding WTB lettered disks where fitted, is about 11ft 11ins (stated in imperial measurement here for comparison with earlier posts).



Figures 25.1 and 25.2: Aluminium posts manufactured and installed by Trueform Engineering, with a modular design. To the left a single timetable case is fitted, with a double one in a 'v' configuration to the right. Early examples had a ledge at the bottom of the case, similar to the one at the top but obviously inverted. These proved troublesome and were later omitted. The solar panels above the flag are also a later development, providing energy to illuminate the flag at night. Left: High Road North Finchley, outside Christ Church, N12; site no.9897; 21st January 2023:

Right: High Road North Finchley, outside no.702, N12; site no.28900; 21st January 2023.



Figures 25.3, 25.4 and 25.5: It is also possible to fit three timetable cases at 90 degrees to each other. Ballards Lane, outside no.27, N3; site no.2761; 18th February 2023.

26. Transport for London

Transport for London (TfL) came into effect in July 2000 and absorbed LRT as well as bringing in responsibility for Docklands Light Railway, river boats, taxis, trams, and walking. It became evident there was a tension between TfL's publicity machine, called Marketing & Communications (they prefer the rather pretentious contraction of 'Marcoms') and the equivalent still very active one at LBSL.

There was much wrangling between the two publicity departments with suppliers to both, a category of which my company was in, finding themselves in an awkward position. Inevitably TfL won out and absorbed the LBSL facility. Interestingly, I hope because of all the excellent work done by Fitch, the TfL department retained them - probably because the head of the LBSL department, Mike King, survived the amalgamation.

With TfL having a much wider brief than LRT and LT before it, signage would now be required for other street activities for which it was now responsible. Fitch designed a full range of signs, based on the ubiquitous bar & circle, and with different modes getting their own colour identity, including Buses, Coaches, Docklands Light Railway, London Overground, London Underground, River services, Taxis and Trams.





Figure 26.1: Victoria station forecourt, SW1; site no.PC06056; 5th March 2023.

Figure 26.2: Buckingham Palace Road, west side, opposite no.134, SW1; site no.BP4770; 5th March 2023.

Re-organizations within TfL (and LUL) have become far too frequent an occurrence, it almost seeming that a new one starts before the last one has finished. In its incarnation of the time in 2011, Leon Daniels, Managing Director of Surface Transport (now Leon Daniels OBE), intervened and asked that the word Bus Stop be reinstated onto the bar. This was done, though not very well proportioned, and gradually all new installations received the revised layout. Rather pointlessly, the thin red bar below the bar & circle was retained, though now blank. The replacement is by no means widespread even now, twelve years on.



Figure 26.3: A Fitch design Compulsory flag as modified at the request of Leon Daniels. One only has to look at the earlier Schleger design to see how much better proportioned the lettering and bar were. By the time this modest job was left to TfL, the heavier New Johnston was being used. The lettering is too small and too heavy; the bar needs to be a bit thicker too.

Engel Park, north side, south of Bittacy Park Avenue, NW7; site no.BP5958; 30th January 2023.

27. As at March 2023

Though still made of vitreous enamel, in order to save money, the entire flag design has been applied as an adhesive vinyl to a plain white vitreous enamel fabrication for several years. The stop names and direction of travel have separate vinyls applied, as have the Eplates.

Despite still using Compulsory and Request differentiated flags, more as a hangover of the past than by intention, the instruction to drivers is always to stop at either type if a passenger is waiting. In practice, all stops are now Compulsory from the drivers' point of view, though probably as Request from that of the passenger.



Figure 27.1: The height of this combination of standard flag and 2-row bolt-on is the most basic now in use. Summers Lane, opposite no.15, N12; site no.BP3972; 5th March 2023.

I have so far not seen a Request flag in this modified style and rather suspect there aren't any.





Figure 27.3: This is an example of the Trueform's modular system being taken too far. The post is supporting a standard height flag with name integral. Attached below the flag are two 3-row bolt-ons. In the context of earlier designs this is a 21E-plate! This must surely contravene the minimum height the underside of the flag is from ground level? Streatham Hill, east side, just south of Christchurch Road; site no.RO417. [courtesy of Chris Leadbeater; 8th February 2023]

28. Back to Where We Started - Almost

Figure 27.2: The height of this combination of standard flag and two 2row bolt-ons can display six E-plates and one Q-plate, as here, or nine E-plates. North Road, outside Highgate School, N6; site no.33141; 6th February 2023.



Figure 27.4: The post design has a vertical groove running top to bottom on both sides. The two flag fixings can be seen at the top. The two bolt-ons are attached to the flag and supported by horizontal connections to the groove on the flag side only. An invisible pillar is sunk into the ground and the main post dropped over the outside of it and secured by two more fixings. [courtesy of Chris Leadbeater; 8th February 2023]

When fixed stopping points had left the kindergarten on their first steps to infancy, a system of site numbers emerged. There have been a few of others but site numbering still has an essential role to play.

Figure 28.1: Beneath the flag the site number can be seen. Another numbering system, unique to each bus stop, is the 77152 shown here. I wonder what the LGOC would have made of mobile phone technology at a time when horses and shovels were still a recent memory. High Road North Finchley, southbound, just north of Summers Lane, N12; site number 9893; 6th February 2023.



THE AWKWARD ONES

I have tried to describe the evolution of posts and flags as chronologically as I can, but some aspects refuse to fit this discipline. Here are some woefully incomplete examples of flags and signs, included for no particular reason other than because I have examples.

29. Shelter Flags

At the outset of writing this piece I decided not to get into shelters as I do not have sufficient knowledge of the various types that have existed. That said, it is hard to ignore the flat flag plates screwed onto the outside of some wooden ones. Here are a few.





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 14x15³/4ins, 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 30.7: Request stop in Liverpool Road, Islington, N1; 12th August 1984.



Figure 30.8: Request stop in DuCane Road, outside Garrett House; W12; 15th 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/are not confined in use to bus stop suspensions. [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 lamppost; 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 31.3: 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.





dates this as circa 1936. [LTM 1983/212]



Figure 31.4: Finchley Road, Golders Green bus station at old trolleybus turning bay, NW11; 18th August 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, SW1; 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 relocated 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.

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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.

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