

DISTRICT LINE TRAIN DESCRIBERS AND PLATFORM INDICATORS

Various different combinations of destinations have been displayed on the old train platform indicators at District Line stations, the particular stations shown varying by both location and by age

This note is an attempt to make some sense of it all.

The guiding principle is that the electrical system that drives the equipment is dependant on four wires for communication, the different codes being transmitted in binary and decoded at each station. It follows that there are fifteen (and no more) possible destination codes that can be accommodated on the system, but codes can be reused for the opposite direction of traffic as each direction of traffic has separate equipment.

However, any particular code is only useful up to the point where it is no longer necessary for it to be used, which will be a terminal point or a junction. It therefore follows that the same code can be used at some point beyond, though of course the destination to which it applies will be different. A code used at the start of a journey must necessarily follow through to the end of the journey, however far. It is accepted that not all reversing points had a code, and there must have been some means of warning signal boxes ahead that a particular train had only an approximate destination (the protocol here is unknown); it seems that stations where scheduled reversing took place did have destination signs at first, but the spaces were soon borrowed for more useful purposes. Because of the hard wiring involved, at both stations and in signal boxes, there was little incentive to rearrange codes, though reallocation within the platform indicators was straightforward (probably easier to shift the plates around rather than meddle with wiring). It is technically possible for one destination sign to be illuminated by more than one code, by simply looping the connections together (the picture on page 90 of 'Thomas' appears to show this). This might explain how little used destinations on the platform indicators were deemed unnecessary at some stations (thus, for example, South Kensington and Gloucester Road could be grouped, and West Kensington and Earls Court). It is assumed that at some reversing points NO INDICATION was shown for a reversing train, though where regular reversing was practised then a 'Stops here' sign was sometimes provided.

It is significant that the largest of the platform indicators had fifteen possible indications, the same as the number of codes. Where all fifteen were not needed, then smaller indicators of ten or five seem to have been the norm. It is conjectured that the largest indicators were used at stations Blackfriars to Sloane Square, Westbound (inclusive), with the 10-display type at most other locations that had indicators, and just a few 5-type. Logic suggests Whitechapel should have had a 15-type, with South Kensington (Dist) and Gloucester Road (Dist) having 10-types. I have no idea what happened on the Whitechapel & Bow section, or west of Earls Court, but suspect good old-fashioned manual boards were employed. Why Mansion House has only a 10-type one can only guess at; it's not as though there was no room. The destinations omitted were not very useful except that Parsons Green might have been wanted. At any rate one might have expected Mansion House to be a key point in generating codes for the 15-type indicators further along, so destinations must have been grouped.

It is clear that little-used codes were soon reclaimed for use on non-stop codes, though Richmond non-stop comes along a bit later. Hounslow also arrives after through running began. South Harrow hasn't been seen. Photos of signs seem to be intriguingly rare.

If one could confirm the type of sign used then one could reconstruct the pattern over the line. Non Stop codes were still in use in the early 1960s but upon withdrawal the panels were replaced by blank blue panels. I think I recollect Ealing Common so that must have arrived in the 1960s.

I think (from a technical paper) Ealing was code 15, Hounslow 2 (but reused), Richmond 10 and Wimbledon 6.

It is possible to establish most of the destination codes which were available to the signalmen in the 1960s and 70s, but this is little guidance as to what appeared on the platform signs.

Be it noted that there were no platform indicators of the type covered here either east of Mansion House or west of Earls Court.

Turnham Green had westbound describer like semaphore arm with four levers and four signs. Believed these said Acton Town, Richmond, Ealing and Hounslow..

Remember Wimbledon SR style boards. NB so's not to forget. Italic bit page2. The boards at Wimbledon were used on all 10 platforms but the sets, obviously, were related to the services that used the various platforms. All boards were painted green, with white lettering (though now I think about it, a lingering doubt about a seldom used red board; perhaps 'Empty to Depot' or some such), including the sets used on the District Line platforms. I regret not recording more about the boards - there was very full provision including all sorts of strange non-stop journeys only used about once a week. I wouldn't be surprised if there was also an 'Aldgate via Edgware Road' board needed even less than once a week. The arrangements at Richmond, not surprisingly, were similar to Wimbledon but it was more expensive to go there so I did it less often. When I worked at Tolworth in the late 1960s I used Wimbledon daily and the boards fell out of use during that time. I only managed to rescue one board. Don't remember the destination off-hand but it has the qualification 'not stopping at West Brompton'. Hmm. Wonder where it is. Now I think of these things, I have a feeling there was some provision at Kew Gardens in the 1950s but we only went there on Sundays so whatever it was wasn't actually being used when we were there. It would've been even more important to have something at Gunnersbury because of green trains diverging from red ones, but I don't remember anything from the early 1960s when I got out there; any arrangement might have gone out of use after the hurricane in the mid 1950s which wrecked the platforms and never got restored.

EASTBOUND

Convention. **Left hand edge** nearest track

EB1

Between Westminster and Sloane Square

1927-28. 10x3. Handling London's Underground Traffic P89

Location unknown but

MANSION HOUSE	BARKING
INNER CIRCLE	SOUTHEND THROUGH TRAIN
WHITECHAPEL	CHARING CROSS
BOW ROAD	(Blank)
EAST HAM	(Blank)

EB2

Earls Court

Photograph 10x1 After 1911 and up to 1930s. (NB Upminster Line replaced Southend during 1930s)

BOW ROAD	CHARING CROSS	
HIGH ST. (KEN)	STOPS HERE	
WHITECHAPEL	EAST HAM	
STH. KENSINGTON	BARKING	
MANSION HOUSE	SOUTHEND THROUGH TRAIN	UPMINSTER LINE

EB3

Earls Court

Photograph 10x1 After 1911 and up to 1930s. (NB Upminster Line replaced Southend during 1930s)

BOW ROAD	CHARING CROSS	
HIGH ST. (KEN)	STOPS HERE	
WHITECHAPEL	EAST HAM	
STH. KENSINGTON	BARKING	
MANSION HOUSE	SOUTHEND THROUGH TRAIN	UPMINSTER LINE

EB4

Earls Court

Photograph 10x1 1950s

BOW ROAD	CHARING CROSS
MANSION HOUSE	STOPS HERE
WHITECHAPEL	STH KENSINGTON
UPMINSTER LINE	BARKING
HIGH ST. (KEN)	HIGH ST (KEN) & EDGWARE ROAD

There were hooks above the Edgware Road description allowing an Aldgate Board to be hung on days when through trains operated.

EB5**South Kensington** (northernmost platform)

Photograph 10x1 1966 (Tower Hill replaced Charing Cross circa 1967)

MANSION HOUSE	(Blank)	
CIRCLE LINE VIA CHARING CROSS	(Blank)	
(Blank)	SPECIAL	NB Reverse side blank
(Blank)	WHITECHAPEL	
UPMINSTER LINE	PLAISTOW	

EB6**South Kensington** (EB side of island?)

Photograph 10x1 1967-8

MANSION HOUSE	STOPS HERE
CIRCLE LINE VIA CHARING CROSS	CHARING CROSS
BARKING	SPECIAL
DAGENHAM EAST	WHITECHAPEL
UPMINSTER	PLAISTOW

EB7**Gloucester Road** (two adjacent signs operated as single indicator)

Photograph 10x1 October 1966

Third panel replaced second during 1967

CHARING CROSS	(Blank)	MANSION HOUSE
WHITECHAPEL	(Blank)	CIRCLE LINE VIA CHARING CROSS
PLAISTOW	(Blank)	BARKING
STOPS HERE	DAGENHAM EAST	DAGENHAM EAST
SPECIAL	UPMINSTER	UPMINSTER

EB8**St James's Park**

Photograph 10x3 1967-8

MANSION HOUSE	CHARING CROSS
CIRCLE LINE VIA CHARING CROSS	WHITECHAPEL
BARKING	PLAISTOW
DAGENHAM EAST	SPECIAL
UPMINSTER	*

* the obscured glass panel next to this blank plate had "Next train in 40 seconds" on it; it illuminated as a train approached.

EB9**Blackfriars**

Photograph 10x3 1967-8

MANSION HOUSE	WHITECHAPEL
CIRCLE LINE VIA CHARING CROSS	PLAISTOW
BARKING	TOWER HILL
DAGENHAM EAST	
UPMINSTER	

EB10**Gloucester Road**

Photograph 10x1 1984

MANSION HOUSE	TOWER HILL
CIRCLE LINE VIA CHARING CROSS	WHITECHAPEL
BARKING	PLAISTOW
DAGENHAM EAST	STOPS HERE
UPMINSTER	SPECIAL

WESTBOUND

Convention. **Left hand edge** nearest track

WB1

St James's Park 1906.

15x3. Jubilee of Automatic & Power Signalling p11

STH. KENSINGTON	PARSON'S GREEN	HAMMERSMITH
GLOUCESTER RD.	PUTNEY BRIDGE	RICHMOND
HIGH ST. (KEN)	WIMBLEDON	MILL HILL PARK
INNER CIRCLE	ADDISON RD.	EALING <small>HARROW HOUNSLOW</small>
EARL'S COURT	W. KENSINGTON	(Blank)

WB2

St James's Park 1930s

15x3 photocopy.

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

WB3

Sloane Square 1920s

15x3 Lee p13 – Think middle section same 1949.

EALING. <small>HARROW HOUNSLOW</small>	EALING NON-STOP	PARSON'S GREEN
WIMBLEDON	WIMBLEDON NON-STOP	HOUNSLOW
[see under]	HOUNSLOW NON-STOP	ACTON TOWN
INNER CIRCLE	RICHMOND NON-STOP	STH. KENSINGTON
RICHMOND	PUTNEY BRIDGE	SPECIAL

In the photograph the panel identified above cannot be read. It looks like a long name with supplementary information below.

WB4**Mansion House 1912**

10x3. Railway Magazine Nov 1912 p423

EALING	EALING NON-STOP
WIMBLEDON	WIMBLEDON NON-STOP
HAMMERSMITH	HOUNSLOW NON-STOP
INNER CIRCLE	STH. KENSINGTON
RICHMOND	PUTNEY BRIDGE

WB5**Mansion House Aug 1971**

10xX. Photograph

(Blank)	PARSON'S GREEN
(Blank)	RICHMOND
(Blank)	EALING BROADWAY
(Blank)	CIRCLE LINE VIA HIGH ST KENSINGTON
(Blank)	WIMBLEDON

WB6**Earls Court 1910**

10 x 1 NB On local platform right hand box replaces Mill Hill Park.

EALING ^{HOUNSLOW} _{HARROW}	EALING NON-STOP	
WIMBLEDON	WIMBLEDON NON-STOP	
PUTNEY BRIDGE	PARSON'S GREEN	
HAMMERSMITH	MILL HILL PARK	HOUNSLOW BRKS
RICHMOND	ADDISON RD.	

WB7**Earls Court 1950s**

10 x 1 NB On local platform right hand box replaces Mill Hill Park.

EALING B'DWAY	EALING	<small>NOT STOPPING AT WEST KENSINGTON STAMFORD BROOK</small>
WIMBLEDON	WIMBLEDON	<small>NOT STOPPING AT WEST BROMPTON</small>
PUTNEY BRIDGE	PARSON'S GREEN	
KENSINGTON (OLYMPIA)	HOUNSLOW	
RICHMOND	ACTON TOWN	

WB8**Earls Court now**

10 x 1

EALING BROADWAY	PARSON'S GREEN
WIMBLEDON	(Blank)
PUTNEY BRIDGE	EALING COMMON
OLYMPIA	(Blank)
RICHMOND	(Blank)

WB9**Blackfriars WB**

Photo 1970s. 15 x 3

EALING BROADWAY	(Blank)	PARSON'S GREEN
WIMBLEDON	(Blank)	(Blank)
(Blank)	(Blank)	EALING COMMON
RICHMOND	(Blank)	(Blank)
CIRCLE LINE VIA HIGH ST KENSINGTON	PUTNEY BRIDGE	SPECIAL

Westbound general. The non-stop panels were as shown early on and for a bit. Then in the 1950s and to the end in early 1960s they were changed to show (usually) the two stations missed out as well as the destination, and became black and yellow, as WB7