Ealing

The growth of London through transport
Map of London’s boroughs

The map shows the current boundaries of London’s boroughs. The content of this album relates to the area highlighted on the map.

This album is one of a series looking at London boroughs and their transport stories from 1800 to the present day.

Key

1. Barking & Dagenham
2. Barnet
3. Bexley
4. Brent
5. Bromley
6. Camden
7. City of London
8. Croydon
9. Ealing
10. Enfield
11. Greenwich
12. Hackney
13. Hammersmith & Fulham
14. Haringey
15. Harrow
16. Havering
17. Hillingdon
18. Hounslow
19. Islington
20. Kensington & Chelsea
21. Kingston
22. Lambeth
23. Lewisham
24. Merton
25. Newham
26. Redbridge
27. Richmond
28. Southwark
29. Sutton
30. Tower Hamlets
31. Waltham Forest
32. Wandsworth
33. Westminster
London Transport Museum would like to thank the staff at Ealing Local History Centre, (London Borough of Ealing Library & Information Service) for their help with this album.

The Museum has worked closely with local partners to produce the series. Details of the partner contributing to this album can be found at the back of the book.

References for the images are at the bottom of each page. Those in the Ealing collections are marked LBE.

* Asterisks indicate a story in the text.
| 1800–49 | 1825 | Opening of the world’s first steam-powered passenger railway, the Stockton & Darlington, UK |
| 1825 | 1838 | Slavery abolished throughout British Empire |
| 1838 | 1861 | Start of American Civil War (ends 1865) |
| 1861 | 1863 | Opening of world’s first underground passenger railway, London, UK |
| 1863 | 1912 | Ocean liner RMS Titanic sinks after hitting an iceberg |
| 1900–49 | 1912 | India gains independence from Britain. Country is partitioned into India and Pakistan |
| 1947 | 1969 | American Neil Armstrong becomes first person to walk on the moon |
| 1969 | 1994 | Channel Tunnel opens linking Britain to European mainland for first time |
| 1994 | 2001 | World Trade Centre in New York destroyed in terrorist attack |
| 2001 | 2002 | Mayor of London proposes tram scheme for Uxbridge Road |
| 2002 | 2005 | World Trade Centre in New York destroyed in terrorist attack |
| 2005 | 2007 | London is awarded the Olympic and Paralympic Games for 2012 |
| 2007 | 2008 | Ealing Council and Transport for London explore a bus-based solution to local traffic congestion |
Ealing’s transport story begins with the coming of the railway in the 1830s.

The railway attracted industry, workers and commuters to the area. During the 20th century, the borough’s village communities and quiet countryside were changed forever by factories, modern housing estates and the transport services needed to serve them. Yet its pleasant character remained and Ealing became known as ‘the Queen of the Suburbs’.

District Railway’s underground station at Ealing Broadway, 1903. Station opened in 1879. The cab driver on the left is Thomas Reeves. In the days before cars, cabs were vital for getting passengers to and from the station. LBE
A remarkable change for the worse took place... in the hitherto retired neighbourhood of Southall. The railway spread dissatisfaction and immorality among the poor, the place being inundated with worthless and overpaid navigators [navvies]... the rusticity of the village gave place to a London-out-of-town character... and the village inn, once a pretty cottage with a swinging sign, is transmogrified to the “Railway Tavern”...

Memoirs of Rev. BJ Armstrong, looking back at 1836

The Great Western Railway (GWR) was built between London (Paddington) and Bristol from 1836–41. It was engineered by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, who solved the problem of running trains across the River Brent with a massive viaduct at Hanwell.

Not everyone was happy about this. At least two fights broke out between villagers and the Irish navvies building the line. The Wharncliffe viaduct is 262m (860ft) long and 20m (65ft) high.

Watercolour of Wharncliffe Viaduct, Hanwell, by JC Bourne, c1837. LBE

Small boys watch trains on the viaduct, Hanwell, c1950. LBE
The first GWR station in the area opened as Ealing Haven in 1838. It is now called Ealing Broadway.

In 1879, the Metropolitan District Railway (now the District line) reached Ealing, offering a better commuter service to central London. The District line terminus was built alongside the Great Western station on Ealing Broadway.
Ealing’s rural character was quickly disappearing as new transport services arrived. The popular pleasure garden at The Feathers had been sold to the GWR to make way for its railway line and Ealing Haven (now Ealing Broadway) station.

A ‘turnpike’ was a road paid for by fees collected from drivers at tollgates. In 1870, Acton’s tollgate keeper was assaulted by a drunken trap driver refusing to pay. The driver was fined 40 shillings.
Middle-class residents of Ealing and Hanwell could travel by a slow and expensive horse bus to London. 1998/20639

Horse tram outside Springfield College, Acton Hill, 1894. LBE West Metropolitan Tramways horse tram ticket, 2d, Acton to Uxbridge Road Station, 1890s. 1990/148/66

Acton’s first horse tram service began operating in 1874, offering the first cheap public transport in this working-class suburb of Ealing. The trams carried around 1000 passengers daily along the Uxbridge Road between Acton and Shepherd’s Bush.

By 1895, even cheaper early morning workmen’s cars ran from Acton to Uxbridge Road station, and by 1899 an all-night service was available.
At the beginning of the 20th century, Ealing considered itself a select suburb, where many wealthy residents had their own carriages.

The introduction of electric trams providing cheap transport for the masses was strongly opposed by the council, championed by district surveyor Charles Jones. Despite this, London United Tramways (LUT) opened the Capital’s first electric street tramway in 1901 along the Uxbridge Road from Shepherd’s Bush to Southall.

Portrait of district surveyor Charles Jones by Frank Brooks, 1910. LBE

Cartoon showing the arrival of the electric tram in Ealing, Ealing Gazette, 13 July 1901. The man on the right seen running away appears to be Charles Jones. LBE
'I first became aware of her when I began to travel from Southall to Kew. I have never spoken to her; she has said one word to me. That word was “Sorry” when she trod on my foot on a tram.'

Lovesick Henry St John had a one-way romance with a girl he saw regularly on his way to work. Diary of Henry St John, c1933

The horse bus companies could not compete with fast electric tramways. By 1909 motorbuses had replaced horses and were beginning to hold their own against the electric trams. New, longer bus routes were soon running from Ealing and Acton right through central London and beyond to East Ham.
By the 1890s most of Ealing’s residential streets were served by public transport, and shopping parades were established along the Broadway and Uxbridge Road.

As the transport networks grew and improved, developers built new estates aimed at the middle class commuter. They offered cheap housing, modest local rates and good transport connections amid pleasant suburban surroundings.
All over the borough, new housing developments, both public and private, replaced older buildings and open countryside.

Map from sale brochure for the Stanhope Estate, Greenford, c.1930. LBE

Newly completed council housing, South Avenue Gardens, 1927. LBE
In 1926, transport workers came out on strike in support of the National Union of Mineworkers, whose members faced wage cuts. Nearly 8000 transport employees lived in Ealing and Acton. Local men, including electricians, councillors and doctors, helped to run a skeleton service on the Underground, trams and buses. Train drivers normally needed 24 days’ training, but volunteers got only 24 hours.

Volunteer bus conductor in plus fours fills in during the strike, Ealing Broadway. 1926. LBE

Volunteer train guard, Ealing Broadway station. 1926. LBE
In 1933, the London Passenger Transport Board took over the running of London’s tramways. London Transport, as it came to be known, decided that trams were slow, old-fashioned and caused traffic congestion. Trolleybuses replaced trams on the routes through Ealing to Hanwell and from Hanwell to Brentford in 1936. They served Ealing until the 1960s.

‘Two women waiting at Dormer’s Wells Lane refrained from getting on the ’bus in order to get on a trolleybus... The ’bus conductor commented on this to me as an instance of how the public flock after anything new. This was the first day on which the trolleybuses replaced the trams on the route from Shepherd’s Bush to Uxbridge.’

Diary of Henry St John, 1936
Ealing Broadway was one of the main railway stations used by evacuees leaving London. In September 1939 alone, 112,994 people left Ealing aboard 163 trains.

‘I remember… a heavy hit on shops and houses in Northfield Avenue… forced the Nos. 55 and 97 bus routes to divert along our road and it amused me to see buses passing our front door…’

John Chudley, BBC website ‘WW2 People’s War’

‘We left Ealing Broadway station, not knowing where we were going, even our parents didn’t know where we were going. It was all hush-hush. We left with just a haversack and a gas mask. I was an only child, very nervous and frightened.’

Ann Rees recalls the Second World War. BBC website ‘WW2 People’s War’
After the First World War, industry replaced agriculture as Ealing's main source of employment. Companies and employees were attracted by good transport links.

The Perivale section of Western Avenue opened in 1930, with large housing estates constructed to the north on ancient farmland. Companies like Hoover and AEC, which built most of London’s buses at that time, established factories at Perivale, Southall and Park Royal. They were among the area’s biggest employers.

Western Avenue, Perivale, c1930. LBE

Western Avenue, Perivale, 1939. The Hoover Building is now a Tesco supermarket. LBE

Widening of Western Avenue to dual carriageway, 1957. LBE
Southall station, April 2007.

The popular Asian station Sunrise Radio is in the background. 2007/4377

Ealing experienced large-scale immigration after the Second World War. Many Asian immigrants arriving in Britain via Heathrow Airport settled in nearby Southall.

To ease over-crowded classrooms, between 1967 and the early 1980s, thousands of Asian children were made to use specific bus routes to get to schools up to 8km (5 miles) from where they lived.

Today, more than 55% of Southall residents in ‘Little India’ are of Indian or Pakistani origin. Southall is also the only London railway station with platform signs in both English and Punjabi.

Southall station, April 2007.
The popular Asian station Sunrise Radio is in the background. 2007/4377
In 2002 Ealing began debating a new tram scheme to address traffic congestion along the Uxbridge Road. By 2007, plans for a new high-frequency ‘Crossrail’ link across London had strengthened, offering Ealing residents the prospect of a fast link into the West End, City and Docklands.

In August 2007, Ealing Council agreed to work with Transport for London on a bus-based solution to solve local congestion rather than the tram originally envisaged.
Ealing now

The borough’s character has changed beyond recognition since its first railway station, Ealing Haven, opened in 1838 at what is now Ealing Broadway.

This photograph of Ealing Broadway station was taken from the same location as the 1903 photograph at the beginning of the album. There is now a single entrance to the combined main line and Underground stations, but the old Metropolitan District Railway lettering still survives above the shopping parade.