

Press release - Friday 11 October 2019



## **New Hidden London exhibition reveals the secrets of disused Underground stations - opens today at London Transport Museum**



- **Discover stories about how Churchill took shelter at the height of the Blitz deep underground**
- **Enjoy, for the first time, the largest number of rare archive photos, objects, vintage posters, secret diagrams and decorative tiles from disused stations that have been brought together in one location**
- **Explore a recreated abandoned ticket hall and secret life-size underground dining room**
- **Race against the clock as you take on the role of a wartime Telephone Exchange Operator in an Underground bunker**
- **Party after-hours at Hidden London themed Friday Lates**
- **New illustrated Hidden London book, published by Yale University Press, now on sale at London Transport Museum's shop and other stores**

Visitors will get the chance to experience an 'abandoned' Tube station underworld and discover what secrets lurk beneath our busy streets at a new Hidden London exhibition opening today at London Transport Museum (Friday 11 October 2019).

*Hidden London: the Exhibition* takes people on an immersive journey of some of London's most secret spaces belonging to the oldest subterranean railway in the world. These 'forgotten' parts of the Tube network have incredible stories to tell about Britain's wartime past such as the Plessey aircraft underground factory which had 2,000 members of staff, mostly women, working in the two 2.5-mile-long tunnels on the eastern section of the Central line during the Second World War.

Inquisitive adults will be able to discover how Winston Churchill took refuge in the Railway Executive Committee's bomb-proof headquarters deep underground at Down Street station in Mayfair. London Transport Museum has recreated the dining-room used by Britain's great wartime leader with replica tables, chairs, wine bottles, menu cards and ashtrays like those Churchill would have used.



Shelter, possibly Clapham South, 1944

Churchill poster, 1943

Plessey wartime factory, Central line, 1941

Despite rationing, Churchill was served the best caviar, champagne, brandy and cigars; courtesy of the railway hotels. At 22 metres below ground, Down Street was safe from air raids and protected from gas attacks. There were lavatories, washrooms, a typing pool and dormitories for around forty staff. Visitors can try their hand at being a wartime Telephone Exchange Operator as they race against the clock to connect incoming callers to the appropriate government departments.

Visitors will be transported to a bygone era as they enter Aldwych station's recreated historic ticket office with an original ticket booth from the station dating from the 1930s, famous Leslie Green tiles from the station, as well as a newspaper stand advertisement announcing the station's closure on 30 September 1994.

Some objects will be on public display for the first time such as a 1939 architectural drawing of Down Street station before it was converted into a secret bunker. It is the first time such a

large number of archive photographs, objects, artworks, diagrams and heritage posters relating to disused stations have been displayed together.

The exhibition uncovers why these 'lost' quirks of the Underground network exist; changes in population, new and expanding Underground lines resulted in lower passenger numbers at certain stations such as Aldwych, economic priorities and political pressures have all led to spaces being abandoned. But they rarely stay that way. While some sections of the Tube system lie 'forgotten', many have been repurposed for new activities and are used as film sets, Hidden London tours and even for growing salad leaves.

King William Street, a station on the first deep-level electric Tube railway which opened in 1890, became redundant in 1900 when the platforms were found to be pointing the wrong way for a proposed new development. This was the result of the City and South London Railway deciding to extend further north of London Bridge. A new northward tunnel was built in 1900, bypassing King William Street which was then left abandoned. Today, this disused station is not open to the public. Images of King William Street station are very rare; the few that exist will be on display, including a drawing of the interior of some of the station in 1890 and a diagram showing how unfinished stations were converted to air raid shelters.

During both the First and Second World Wars, Tube stations provided natural shelter from dropping bombs. For whole nights, these dark, grimy and humid environments accommodated civilians. At the start of the Second World War sheltering was initially banned on the Underground network, but as the Capital came under near-continuous aerial attack, Londoners flocked to Tube stations and this policy was changed. Original shelter tickets, advertising posters warning of the dangers of air raids, as well as a graph from 1941 showing how infectious diseases could spread, demonstrate to today's visitors the harsh realities of life underground during this period of siege.



I Thank You, film poster, 1941

London Underground has served as a location for movie makers since the 1920s and is still used for filming today. Although most of Charing Cross Tube station is still used by

thousands of passengers on a daily basis, various scenes in the Skyfall (2012) blockbuster were filmed in the disused sections of Charing Cross Underground station. Film fans will love the section of the exhibition featuring vintage film posters through the ages from an unused poster artwork for the 1972 film Death Line to the film poster for V for Vendetta (2005), a dystopian drama in which the hero V is holed up at a decaying Aldwych station.

**Chris Nix, Assistant Director for Collections and Engagement at London Transport Museum**, said: “Visitors will love being transported to our recreated secret station subterranean world. People will be able to step in to a stage set of the dining room at Down Street where Winston Churchill sought refuge at the height of the Blitz, thanks to the Railway Executive Committee which was responsible for the bunker in the then disused station. For the first time we’ve brought together a large number of historic posters, archive photos and footage, secret diagrams and decorative tiles about disused spaces on the Underground – all in one place.”

**Matt Brosnan, Head Curator at London Transport Museum**, said: “We’ve tried to emulate the look and feel of life deep underground with a disused ticket office and an eerie stairwell for visitors to climb. Visitors can also rise to the challenge of being a war-time Telephone Exchange Operator connecting multiple callers at once – while racing against the clock.”

Those wishing to take a bit of disused station history home can treat themselves to a new illustrated **Hidden London book** (Hardback, £25) published by Yale University Press which will be on sale from 10 September at London Transport Museum’s shop in Covent Garden, online at [www.ltmuseumshop.co.uk](http://www.ltmuseumshop.co.uk) and other stores nationwide. The book is an exploration of the abandoned spaces of London’s vast and vital transportation network with breathtaking images and unexpected stories.

The new Hidden London book provides the first narrative of a previously secret and barely understood aspect of London’s history. Behind locked doors and lost entrances lies a hidden world of abandoned stations, redundant passageways, empty elevator shafts, and cavernous ventilation ducts.

With access to previously unseen archives, architectural drawings, and images, the authors create an authoritative account of London’s hidden Underground story. This surprising, and at times, myth-breaking narrative interweaves spectacular, newly commissioned photography of disused stations and Underground structures today. Written by Chris Nix, Assistant Director of Collections and Engagement, London Transport Museum, Sidly

Holloway, Hidden London Engagement Manager, London Transport Museum and author and Museum Consultant David Bownes with Sam Mullins OBE, Director of London Transport Museum.

At the Museum's exhibition launch **Friday Late** event tonight, guests will be the first to visit *Hidden London: The Exhibition*, meet the people behind the Hidden London tour programme and gain unique behind-the-scenes insights from experienced tour guides and researchers, all in a relaxed and fun-filled Friday night atmosphere. As well as enjoying gallery tours, expert talks, object handling and a Museum scavenger hunt, visitors can test their knowledge of London at the quiz, join in with creative crafts, and mingle among the Museum's collection after hours with music and cocktails from the pop-up bar.

The Hidden London exhibition was designed by Skellon Studio and Seeing Things who worked closely with London Transport Museum team to make the visitor experience truly immersive, accessible and educational.

Skellon Studio and Seeing Things have collaborated on numerous exhibitions including 'A Pirate's Life for Me!' at the V&A Museum of Childhood and The Battle of Britain Bunker in Hillingdon.

**Katherine Skellon** said: "It was an interesting challenge to recreate the spooky atmosphere of the Hidden London Tube stations deep underground in a first-floor museum gallery but brilliant fun."

Kids go free and adult tickets allow unlimited entry to London Transport Museum's galleries and temporary exhibitions for a whole year. Adult tickets start at £16.50 online.

*Hidden London: the Exhibition* closes in January 2021.

Visitors wishing to continue their Hidden London experience can also join exclusive tours of disused stations such as Aldwych, Charing Cross, Clapham South, Down Street, Euston, 55 Broadway and Highgate. Visit [www.ltmuseum.co.uk/hidden-london](http://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/hidden-london)

Look out for new Hidden London events and experiences by subscribing to the Museum's newsletter. A new range of products to accompany the new Hidden London exhibition will be launched in autumn 2019 to complement the Hidden London range of exclusive gifts and souvenirs, which currently include stylish crockery inspired by beautiful station tiles.

A sneak preview of the new Hidden London exhibition can be seen here:

<https://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/hiddenlondonpreview>

The media partner for Hidden London: the Exhibition is *Discover Britain*. *Discover Britain* magazine reveals the iconic history, hidden treasures and rich culture of the British Isles through stunning photography and expert guides.

The exhibition takes place in the Global Gallery which is sponsored by Global, one of the world's leading media and entertainment groups. It is Europe's largest radio company and one of the leading Outdoor companies in both the UK & Europe. London Transport Museum is grateful for Global's long standing support.

Broadcast quality B-roll footage can be downloaded here:

<https://vimeo.com/user103214207/review/365561755/3796a5d028>

**Ends**

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**Notes to Editors:**

**About London Transport Museum**

- London Transport Museum's purpose is to ignite curiosity to shape the future. The Museum is situated in the heart of Covent Garden and filled with stunning exhibits; the Museum explores the powerful link between transport and the growth of modern London, culture and society since 1800. Historic vehicles, world-famous posters and the very best objects from the Museum's extraordinary collection are brought together to tell the story of London's development and the part transport played in defining the unique identity of the city.
- The Museum is a charity and the world's leading museum of urban transport and a place for everyone to come to understand and enjoy the story of London's journey. No other capital city is defined and shaped so much by its transport as London. Yet the scale of influence of transport can be invisible to those who use it every day. The Museum's collections, together with its lively events and learning programme are a window into the past, present and future of how transport keeps London moving, working and growing, and makes life in our city better. The Museum's charity number is 1123122.
- London Transport Museum is supported by public funding from Arts Council England.

**About Discover Britain, the media partner for Hidden London: the Exhibition.**

- *Discover Britain* is an award-winning magazine exploring the very best the British Isles has to offer, whether people are looking for destination inspiration or yearn to learn more about history and culture. Inside each issue, experts take the reader behind the scenes at national landmarks, lesser-known destinations, as well as celebrating unique traditions and anniversaries, and introducing the people who have made Britain great. The dedicated London section also cherry picks the latest venues and events in the nation's capital. Packed with stunning photography of historic buildings, hidden treasures, pretty villages and wild countryside, *Discover Britain* is an essential guide to getting the most out of holidays or day trips.

**Travel to London Transport Museum:**

- Address: Covent Garden Piazza, WC2E 7BB.
- The nearest stations to London Transport Museum are:
  - o **Underground:** Covent Garden, Leicester Square, Charing Cross, Embankment, Holborn
  - o **National Rail:** Charing Cross and Waterloo
  - o **Boat:** Embankment or Westminster pier
  - o **Bus:** Strand or Aldwych

**Tickets for London Transport Museum:**

- Museum open daily from 10:00-18:00.
- Cheapest tickets available online – kids go free!
- Tickets include unlimited daytime access to the Museum for a whole year – visit as many times as you like to enjoy new exhibitions and family fun activities.

**Public information:**

- Booking office, events and 24-hour information +44 (0) 343 222 5000

[www.ltmuseum.co.uk](http://www.ltmuseum.co.uk)