

Delve into the Acton depot



Hidden gems: Enjoy the London Transport Museum Depot's collection online

DISCOVER THE FASCINATING HISTORY OF LONDON TRANSPORT MUSEUM'S DEPOT

OPENED in 1980 in Covent Garden, London Transport Museum is home to thousands of exhibits charting the city's rich history of transport right back to the 1920s. But, as its collection has grown, it needed more space to house everything from tickets, uniforms and posters to buses, trams and even Tube train carriages.

In October 1999, a specially designed 6,000 square metre site in Acton was opened to store more than 370,000 excess items. Acton Depot is now the main base for the museum's curators and conservators, and can be accessed both by road and rail, enabling its vintage rolling stock on to the Underground network on special occasions.

Many of the highlights in the depot can be explored online. Here are just a few of them.

GARDEN SEAT-TYPE HORSE BUS

This horse bus (pictured below) was operated by the London General Omnibus Company from 1880 to 1911. It was the lightest and strongest vehicle of its type and could carry 28 people at nearly 8mph.



POSTERS GALORE

The depot is home to many of the museum's original works of art, including its stunning poster collection, which is acknowledged as one of the finest transport poster collections in the world.

There are posters lifted from disused Tube stations, as well as new designs and reproductions of posters from when London Transport first began, dating back as far as 1908.

JOHNSTON TYPEFACE

In 1913, expert calligrapher Edward Johnston was commissioned by London Underground's managing director, Frank Pick, to design a new typeface for the Underground. This cabinet of wooden printing blocks (pictured top left) was used for decades by printers to produce the text and captions for Underground posters and signs.

Q STOCK

The Q38 stock was part of a major modernisation scheme on the Underground that began in 1935. The modern cars had stylish windows and distinctive flared sides, which were partly to stop people riding on the outside of cars. Used on the District line from 1939 to around 1970, the new cars were often combined with older stock.

ALL ABOARD

The depot even has its own working miniature railway based on real London Underground locomotives, carriages, signals and signs. Since it entered 'service' in 2005, it has carried thousands of passengers over the depot's Open Weekends.

Transport treasures in the west

AS the depot is currently closed, April's Open Weekend will not be going ahead.

However, the museum will be recreating the experience online with a 'virtual Open Weekend' activity hub.

ONLINE FUN

Sign up to the museum's e-newsletter to be the first to know when this goes live on its website, and get your weekly dose of curious transport stories, fun facts and online shop offers. For more details, visit ltmuseum.co.uk

GOOGLE ARTS

Some other ways to enjoy the depot's treasures online include taking a peep at the museum's Google Arts selection called '20 treasures for 20 years'.

You can enjoy Depot Discovery films, where staff and volunteers tell some of the stories behind a range of objects and collections. Visit ltmuseum.co.uk/collections/depot-discovery

A published guide to the depot is also available so you can whet your appetite for exploring when it reopens. Visit ltmuseumshop.co.uk

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