

A plus for architecture

EXPLORING THE PICCADILLY LINE'S NORTHERN EXTENSION WITH THE HISTORIAN TIM DUNN

BROADCASTER, historian and writer Tim Dunn is back with a second series of *The Architecture the Railways Built*, with tonight's episode focusing on the Piccadilly line northern extension stations of the 1930s. It explores those stations designed by the well-known architect, Charles Holden.

Tim is a huge fan of London's Tube network, describing it as 'the greatest underground network in the world'.

He is particularly fond of the stations that feature in tonight's show and the forward thinking of architect Holden.

'Before this lockdown we visited Arnos Grove, Southgate and Oakwood and I talk about their shocking style at the time,

their cleverness and how TfL still looks to them as icons today.

'What I love about the northern extension are the international influences on the stations. The architect, Charles Holden, had been on a tour of great buildings across Europe and brought back ideas to Britain for us to benefit from.

'Arnos Grove, with its drum-like tower, is based on Stockholm's city library, but my favourite design detail has to be the Tesla coil on the top of Southgate station. The whole building looks like a UFO – imagine this landing in what was mainly fields in the growing suburbs in 1933. It lights up at night, it's extraordinary still in 2021.'

The Piccadilly line began as the Great

Northern, Piccadilly & Brompton Railway, opening between Finsbury Park and Hammersmith in December 1906.

EXTENDING THE LINE

The railway proved popular from its opening and became known as the 'Piccadilly Railway'. By the 1920s, severe congestion at the northern terminus at Finsbury Park, where customers would interchange on to trams, buses and the LNER mainline, led to the line being extended to Arnos Grove in 1932 and to Enfield West (now Oakwood) in March 1933, with the final section to Cockfosters completed that July.

Holden was commissioned by the Underground's managing director, Frank Pick, to design a remarkable series of new buildings for the expanding Underground that would change the face of London.

In the 1930s, a distinctive house style emerged with a restrained modernism that combined a unified look with subtle variety.

DESIGNS FOR THE FUTURE

Holden's work on the Piccadilly line shows his attention to detail and commitment to total design. Everything including the fixtures and fittings, the subtle lighting, and carefully designed but functional platform furniture came under Holden's responsibility, even as far as the litter bins.

His station designs set new architectural standards and Arnos Grove, Southgate and Sudbury Town are now regarded as examples of the best public architecture of the period and are listed buildings, along with another 17 stations on the line.

The *Architecture the Railways Built* is on Tuesdays at 8pm on the Yesterday channel, available on Freeview and Virgin Media.

Clever designs: (From top) The TV presenter Tim Dunn, the interior of Arnos Grove station, and exterior of Oakwood Tube station UKTV




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