

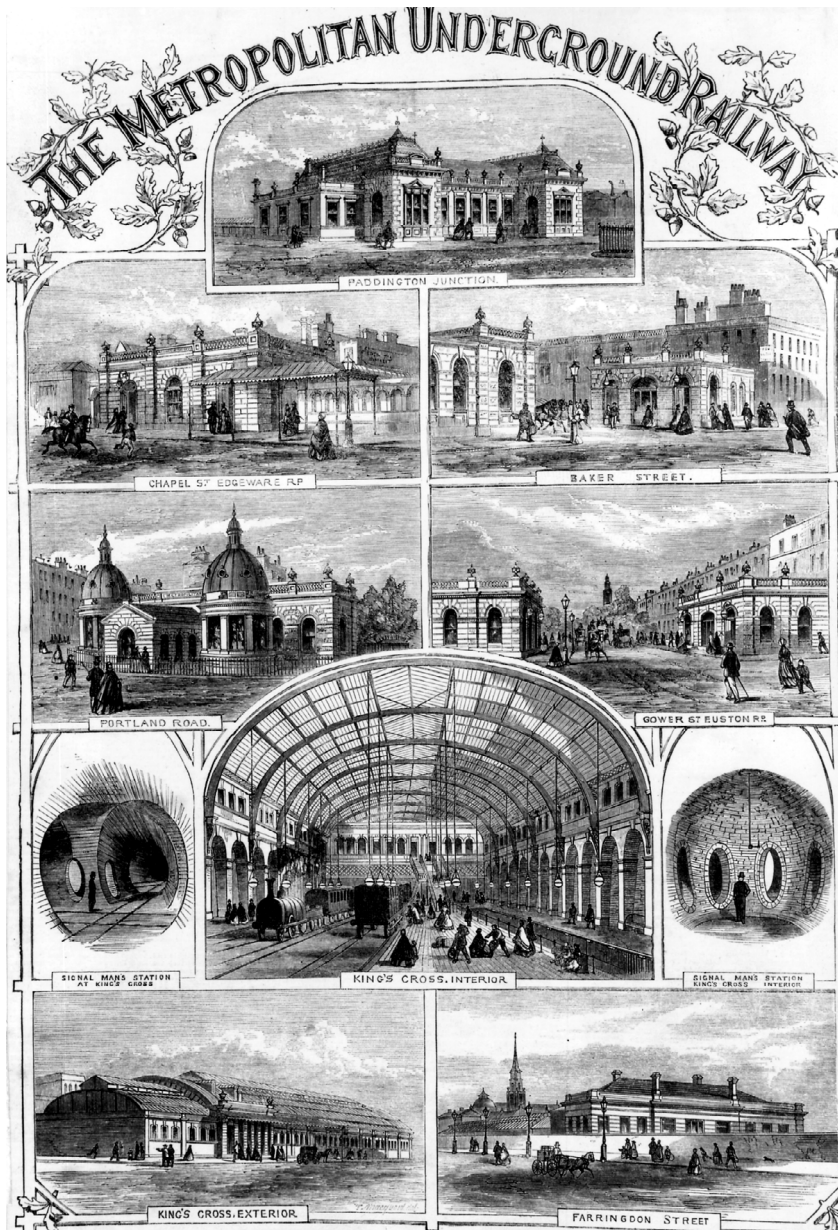


by london transport museum

BAKER

**BAKER STREET**

The world's first underground railway



The completed Metropolitan Railway stations shortly before opening, as shown in the Illustrated London News, 27 December 1862. 1998/86201

## INTRODUCTION

Baker Street is an iconic, Grade II\* listed station on the London Underground which has served Londoners for more than 160 years. Today the station has more platforms than any other on the Underground network; 10 in total served by five different lines.

The first station on this site opened on the pioneering Metropolitan Railway on 10 January 1863. It was one of seven stations that began operating on the first underground railway in the world. The station gradually expanded through the 19th and 20th century, modernising along the way but preserving its unique heritage too.

Behind closed doors, the story of Baker Street is embedded in its very fabric, ready to reveal the part it has played in the history of the Underground from the station's Victorian origins through to the 21st century.

## THE WORLDS FIRST UNDERGROUND RAILWAY

In the 19th century, London was a congested city and travelling was difficult for Londoners living and working in the capital. Most people walked to where they needed to go. The population was growing and the arrival of the mainline railways into London from 1837 meant even more people were crowded onto the city's streets. Horse-drawn public transport and private hire vehicles were available, but they were expensive and services were limited.

For the thousands of commuters arriving at the newly built mainline railway termini, onward journeys were challenging. A journey from Paddington in the west to the City of London could take up to an hour and a half.

A solution to the problem was promoted by the solicitor for the City of London, Charles Pearson. He proposed building a railway underneath the city streets to connect the mainline termini to the City of London. The idea was a radical one which had never been tried anywhere else in the world. Nevertheless, the proposal got parliamentary approval in 1855 and construction started in 1860 under the direction of engineer John Fowler.

The railway was built largely by hand using the 'cut and cover' construction method. This involved digging a trench in the road, supporting the sides with retaining walls, laying the tracks, then covering them with a roof to make a tunnel before laying the road back on top. It was hugely disruptive and costly but building the railway under the road was still cheaper than acquiring and demolishing buildings.

The Metropolitan Railway opened to passengers on 10 January 1863 with stations at Bishop's Road (now Paddington), Edgware Road, Baker Street, Portland Road (now Great Portland Street), Gower Street (now Euston Square), King's Cross and Farringdon Street (now Farringdon). The railway was an immediate success. Passengers responded positively to the idea of venturing underground to travel and more than 40,000 journeys were made on the first day of operation.

The station at Baker Street was situated in a large cutting beneath the road, with platforms on either side of the track lit by gas lamps. Recesses built into the walls on both sides of the tunnel had glass at street level to let in natural light. The station buildings were simple

Italianate buildings with flights of stairs leading down to the platforms.

Passengers soon began to complain about the air quality when travelling on the railway. The steam locomotives were powered by burning coal and despite special condensing equipment fitted to the engines, the air in the stations

was sulphurous and full of smoke. Attempts were made to mitigate the problem with air vents along the route. At Baker Street, glazing in the platform recesses was removed in the late 1860s to aid ventilation. Despite this, air quality remained unpleasant until electrification in 1905.



Original entrance to Baker Street Underground station, 1908. 1998/86169



Painting depicting the Baker Street platforms in 1863, by 20th century artist, C. Hamilton Ellis. 1987/ 85

## METROPOLITAN EXPANSION

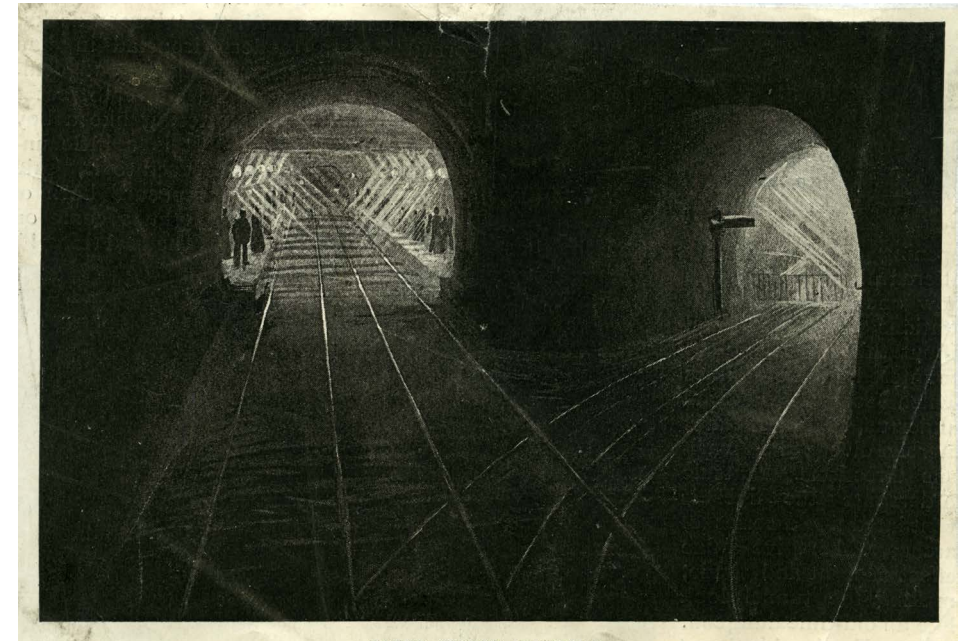
In 1865, the first extension of the Metropolitan Railway opened eastwards to Moorgate with an intermediate station at Aldersgate Street. In 1868 the first section of the District Railway opened from Kensington to Westminster aiming eventually to link the new southern main line stations with the City. By joining up the two ends an 'Inner Circle' underground railway would be created, but it took many years before the link was finally completed in 1884.

From Baker Street, a new railway called the Metropolitan & St John's Wood Railway opened on 13 April 1868 extending north to Swiss Cottage. Separate platforms called Baker Street East were constructed to serve the new line, connected to the original station via a footbridge. A new junction was constructed which allowed trains to run through to the City from the suburbs.

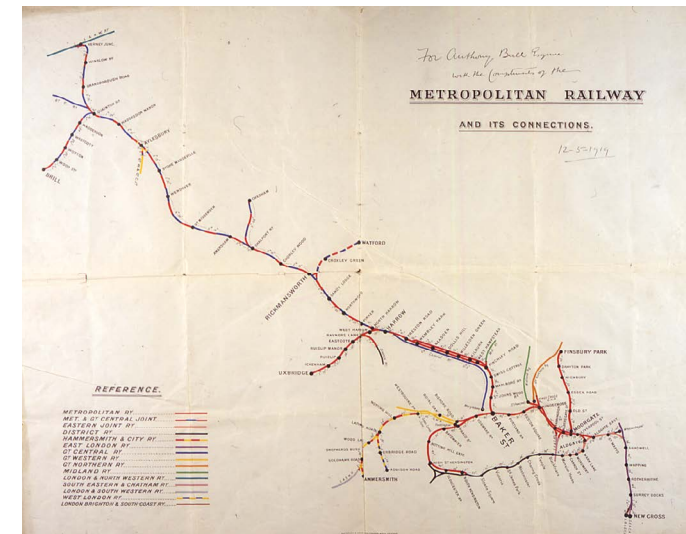
The 'Metropolitan Extension' gradually extended north-westwards, to Harrow in 1880, and on into Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire. By 1892 the railway had reached Aylesbury Town and Verney Junction. In 1904 a branch opened to Uxbridge and in 1925 the line from Rickmansworth to

Watford opened. The last Metropolitan extension opened from Wembley Park to Stanmore in 1932.

Because of the expanded services and increased passenger numbers, the platforms at Baker Street were rebuilt in 1892 with a new configuration to deal with congestion at peak times. Despite the changes the station still struggled to meet increased demand. The decision was taken to rebuild Baker Street and build a new headquarters for the Metropolitan Railway at the same time Approval was obtained in 1910 and construction commenced soon after.



Baker Street showing the junction between the original Metropolitan platforms (left) and Baker Street East (right), which allowed trains to travel into the City from the Metropolitan extension, c1880. 2010/24595



Metropolitan Railway and its connections, 1919. 2003/19969

## RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENTS

The man charged with designing the new Baker Street station was Charles Walter Clark, the chief architect of the Metropolitan Railway from 1911. He replaced the original Italianate station buildings with a surface building located on the north side of Marylebone Road with stairs leading down to a single sub-surface ticket hall. A new Headquarters building on Allsop Place was also constructed and named Selbie House after Robert Selbie, the Metropolitan's general manager from 1908 to 1930.

In addition to the sub-surface booking hall, the new station was built with a circulating area, oak-panelled refreshment rooms, cloakrooms, a lost property office and store, ladies' rooms, a parcels yard, and other offices. In addition, a subway opened linking the Circle line platforms to the Bakerloo line.

By 1913 most of the work had been completed but the plans to build a hotel on top of the station building along with further headquarters accommodation was halted in 1914 at the outbreak of the First World War.

In 1915 the Metropolitan Railway marketing department coined the phrase 'Metro-land' to describe the country districts served by

the company. The Metropolitan Railway had special clauses in their parliamentary approvals that allowed them to retain surplus land after construction of the railway for further use by the company. So, they built houses on their excess land and Baker Street became known as 'The Gateway to Metro-land'.

The plans to build on top of Baker Street were revived in the 1920s, with construction of Chiltern Court starting in 1927. The building was the largest block of flats in London when it opened in 1929 with 198 units, a hairdresser's, staff accommodation and the Chiltern Court Restaurant. Famous residents included authors H.G. Wells and Arnold Bennett.

The days of the Metropolitan Railway as an independent company were now numbered. In 1933 the London Passenger Transport Board (LPTB) was formed, taking over the company and all its services.



Shopping arcade in the ticket hall at Baker Street station, 1958. The station had one of the longest-standing news theatres in London. 1998/88642



Baker Street Underground station, with portico (destroyed in the Second World War) and Chiltern Court in the background. 2003/18870



Baker Street &amp; Waterloo Railway station building, 1907. 2000/21383



Bakerloo line ticket hall, 1928. 1998/87517

## THE BAKER STREET & WATERLOO RAILWAY

On 10 March 1906, the Baker Street & Waterloo Railway (now the Bakerloo line) opened a station on a separate site in Upper Baker Street, immediately to the north of where Chiltern Court now stands.

The street-level building was designed by Leslie W Green with a facade of ox-blood red tiles, five large arched windows and a flat roof structure to allow additional development. The name of the railway was spelt out in raised gilded letters above the mezzanine, whilst the station name, in similar lettering, appeared below.

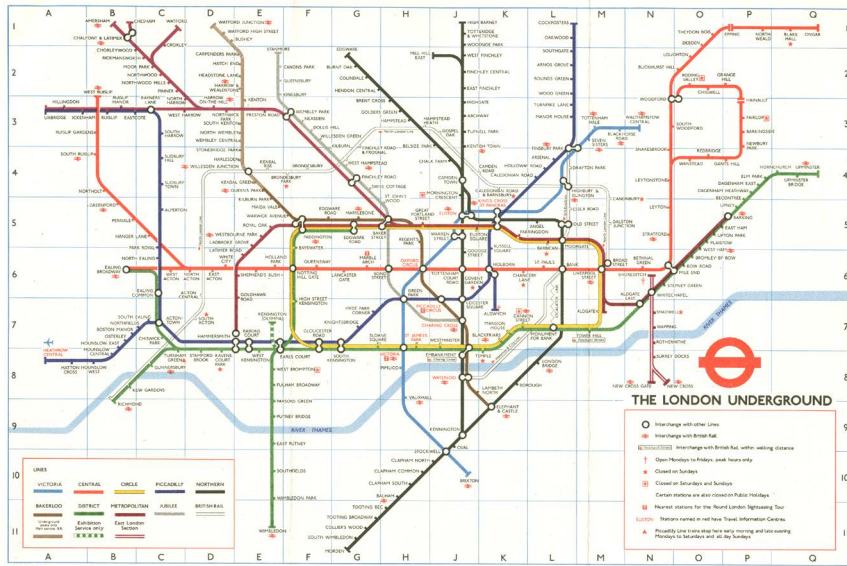
The booking hall had green and cream glazed tiles, the green having an acanthus leaf design at shoulder height. Four Otis lifts connected the booking hall to the platforms. From the lower lift landing access was straight onto the northbound platform and a short flight of stairs lead to the southbound, due to the platforms being stacked on top of each other. At platform level the tiling pattern and colour scheme was a unique blue/brown wall tiling and cream tile background.

Connection to the Metropolitan station was by a footbridge from the

north end of the Baker Street East platforms to the Bakerloo booking hall, where the Metropolitan had its own booking office. On 15 October 1914, interchange between the Metropolitan and Bakerloo line stations was improved by the installation of two escalators. They provided direct access to the Bakerloo line platforms from a new circulating area and booking office reached by short staircases from the new Metropolitan line (Baker Street East) platforms.

At the same time, the Metropolitan booking office at the Bakerloo station was closed, and both railways agreed to sell the other's tickets. The original lifts at the Bakerloo line station remained in use to carry passengers up to street-level.

When the LPTB was formed in 1933, ambitious plans called the New Works Programme were made to expand and modernise London's transport. One of the projects included transferring the newly built Stanmore branch on the Metropolitan to the Bakerloo via new tunnels from south of Finchley Road to Baker Street.



Underground map from 1979 showing the newly opened Jubilee line running from Stanmore to Charing Cross. 1980/351/2



A mural on the Jubilee platform at Baker Street Station showing an extract from the Sherlock Holmes story "The Adventures of the Lion's Mane", by Robin Jacques, c1979. 1998/89370

## THE STANMORE BRANCH

In 1932 the Metropolitan Railway had opened a new branch line from Wembley Park to Stanmore, but the increased traffic caused delays and bottlenecks in the stretch of line between Finchley Road and Baker Street.

The New Works Programme proposed to alleviate this by constructing a new tunnel from Baker Street to Finchley Road and converting the Stanmore line into a branch of the Bakerloo.

The extension of the Bakerloo line to Finchley Road and Stanmore in 1939 involved substantial alterations to the Bakerloo station at Baker Street. A second southbound platform was constructed slightly to the north of the original. A new circulating area was constructed at platform level, whilst the circulating area below the Metropolitan lines was enlarged to house the upper ends of the two new escalators leading to and from the southbound platforms. Two further escalators of similar type led to a new booking hall at street level. The new Stanmore branch of the Bakerloo line opened on 20 November 1939 and the original Bakerloo line station building was closed. The lifts remained in situ and

saw one more day of use, on 8 June 1946, to help clear the huge crowds that had attended the Victory Parade celebrating the end of the Second World War. Eventually the lift gear was removed and transferred to Highbury station in 1952. The original Bakerloo line station building was demolished in 1963.

The Stanmore branch was transferred to the Jubilee line in 1979. Originally conceived as the Fleet line and renamed the Jubilee line in 1977, the idea was to create a through route from Stanmore to the City and relieve congestion on the Bakerloo line, especially around Baker Street. A new northbound platform was constructed along with connecting passageways to allow for cross platform interchange with the Bakerloo.

The Jubilee line platform walls at Baker Street featured bright red tiling, with panels depicting seven different scenes from the Sherlock Holmes stories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Designed by Robin Jacques, these were placed behind the seats on the platforms.



London Transport rifle range at Baker Street, 1981.



Cake decoration class at the canteen staff training school at Baker Street c1945-1960. 1998/47092

## STAFF FACILITIES

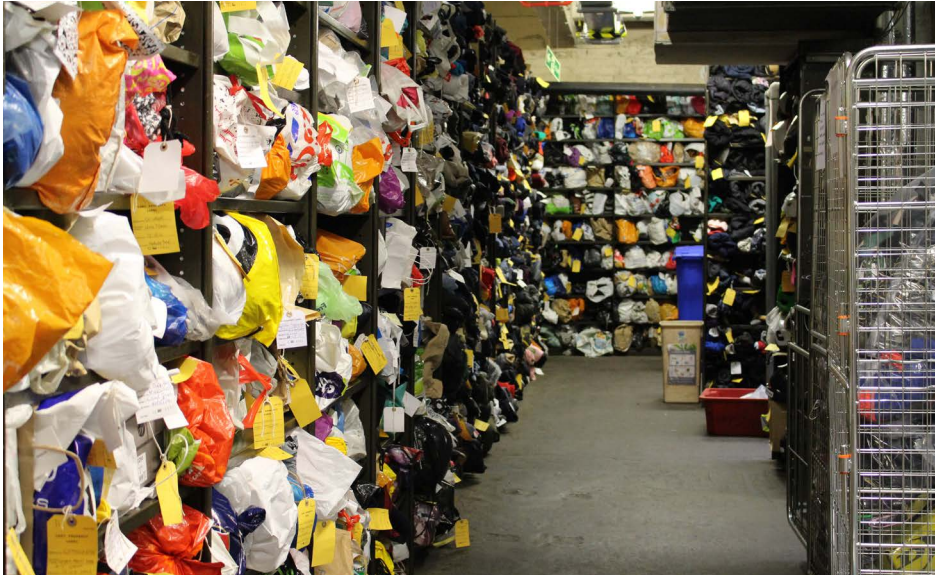
Baker Street has been the home of the Metropolitan line for over 160 years. The site has also been home to transport staff throughout its history. Once the headquarters of the Metropolitan Railway, the Baker Street complex has housed a range of services including: the Central Control Rooms for the Bakerloo, Central, Jubilee and Metropolitan lines; one of the first operational sites of the British Transport Police; a canteen staff training school; and the Lost Property Office.

The Lost Property Office is probably the best known facility at Baker Street. Opened in 1933, it is estimated that over the 86 years of operation at 200 Baker Street, more than 15 million items of property were processed and stored. Anything passengers can carry on transport services they can also lose. As well as thousands of umbrellas, the most extraordinary items have been handed in, including a human skeleton and a coffin. The Lost Property office moved to a new location in 2019 in South Kensington, which was more suited to its ever-expanding needs.

As well as serving as a training centre and control centre, Baker Street also had an unusual recreational space in its basement. The London Transport Rifle Club was based at Baker Street with a large shooting range and club room where members could relax. Opened in 1939 and closed in the late 1990s, the area is now occupied by the revenue control team and its former purpose has been largely forgotten.

The control centre for the Metropolitan line will depart from Baker Street to Hammersmith once the Four Line Modernisation project is complete, however the Bakerloo line control centre will remain at Baker Street for the foreseeable future.





Inside the Lost Property Office in Baker Street, October 2019. 2020/64



The Lost Property Office at Baker Street in October 2019, shortly before moving to South Kensington. 2019/2137

## BAKER STREET TODAY

Baker Street continues today as one of the most important interchanges on the London Underground and is still 'the Gateway to Metroland'.

In 1984 the original Metropolitan platforms were restored to their former Victorian glory. Timber panelling and paintwork from the 1920s were removed, the brickwork was cleaned and the original alcoves were tiled to create an illusion of natural light coming from above. The Circle and Metropolitan line platforms originally received a Grade II listing from the Department of the Environment in 1987. On 28 June 2010 this was amended to Grade II\*.

In 2015, as a part of TfL's Transported by Design programme, the original platforms of the Metropolitan line were voted by Londoners as one of their 10 favourite transport design icons. This just goes to show that the modern Baker Street station still occupies a special place in the hearts of Londoners and visitors, just as it did when it opened way back in 1863.



Statue of Sherlock Holmes outside Baker Street station, 2023.



Original platforms at Baker Street, 2023.

For more information about the history of the site, the context in which it was built, and other underground structures, the following publications are recommended:

**Chris Nix, Sidley Holloway, David Bownes with Sam Mullins**  
**Hidden London: Discovering the forgotten Underground**  
 Yale University Press, 2019

**T.C Barker & Michael Robbins**  
**A History of London Transport Volume One – The Nineteenth Century**  
 George Allen and Unwin, 1975

**David Bownes, Oliver Green and Sam Mullins**  
**Underground How the Tube-Shaped London**  
 Allen Lane, 2012

**J E Connor**  
**London's disused Underground stations**  
 Capital Transport, 2021

**Desmond F Croome and Alan A Jackson**  
**Rails through the Clay**  
 Capital Transport, 1993

**Alan A Jackson**  
**London's Metropolitan Railway**  
 David & Charles, 1986

Titles still in print are available in the London Transport Museum shop or can be ordered from the Museum's online shop. All the publications and further information can be consulted in the Museum library by appointment. See the Museum website for details.

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