

Historic London maps reveal the pace of change

By John Aldridge

Title:	The 1934 Greater London Bus Map The 1939 Greater London Bus Map
Publisher:	Mike Harris, 27 Albany Road, Wickford, Essex, SS12 9BP
Price:	£5 (1934), £4 (1939)



The two latest historic London bus maps encompass significant years in the history of the former London Passenger Transport Board.

Newly formed in July 1933 by the time of the 1934 map – 3 October – it had just completed a major route renumbering system to replace the impossible Metropolitan Police Bassom system, which imposed a new suffix for every conceivable short working on each route.

It had also begun integration of the once-

competing tram network with the buses. Mid-1939 – 11 June - had found LPTB at its best, and trolleybus replacement of trams well under way before the outbreak of World War 2 imposed all sorts of restrictions and needs. Both maps are modelled on the style introduced by London Transport in the late 1970s, with accurate representation of the curving and twisting road network.

Each covers all road-based public transport in Greater London, thus Central (red) buses, trams and trolleybuses and Green Line coaches (whose routes were lettered), plus Country (green) buses where appropriate are all included on the same map. All official maps of the period each only covered one of these.

Garage and depot locations are also marked and there are separate lists of all the routes. The 1939 map is a second edition of a previous one, as research for the 1934 one also provided some new information and corrections.

Comparisons between the two maps show route developments by 1939 as house building in the suburbs boomed, but sometimes also illustrates the LPTB's unwillingness to undertake route extensions until they could become profitable.

Thus as the area around New Addington began to develop, it was served only by a

shuttle service by the First National Housing Trust to Addington, Featherbed Lane where it connected with route 64. Not until July 1939 did LPTB service 130 take over, running through to Croydon by a different route to the 64.

In 1934, traffic congestion had already begun to be a problem on longer routes. Steps to divide them, usually with an overlap of two fare stages, were the way forward. One not yet so treated in 1934 was the 93, a number still known for today's route between Putney Bridge Station, Wimbledon and North Cheam. Back then, it ran from Southall through Shepherd's Bush and Putney Bridge to South Wimbledon, with peak and weekend extension to North Cheam.

The 1934 map includes operations by the few independents still yet to be taken over by the LPTB.

Surrounding counties to London then came much closer in than they do now, and there was then still a county of Middlesex. Another route back then, which went out on a limb, was the 250A between Romford and Ongar.

Whether you just wonder what it used to be like where you live now or are making a serious study, you should find these reasonably priced maps invaluable.