

White Heat London 9 / Railways

Euston station rebuild Transforming London's first terminal

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The London & Birmingham Railway finally reached the centre of the capital in 1837. Additional buildings were repeatedly added in response to increased passenger and parcel traffic and railway company amalgamations; these included the Hardwicks' Doric 'arch' and Great Hall. Eventually, with steam giving way to electrification and motorways threatening the newly nationalised railway network, complete rebuilding became unavoidable. The track, platforms, signalling and mail depot were addressed first. This also hid from public view new spaces for train crews and station staff, engineers and caterers, police officers and clerks, as well as linen stores, freezers and a medical centre. Vehicles were sent below ground to car park, taxi rank or service subway.

As a result, the new triple-height passenger concourse in exposed concrete, glass and polished granite was entirely free of vehicles. A travel centre handled ticket sales, sleeper and boat train services and hotel reservations; there were also shops, waiting areas and extensive refreshment provision on two floors. Toilet, shower and bath facilities also awaited travellers.

A proposed office and hotel block to offset the cost emerged in the 1970s in different form. Today, the High Speed 2 line is changing Euston again.





Passengers sharing space with parcels, taxis and even horses had become a tradition at railway stations, but it was not one that the London Midland Region of British Rail wished to sustain. The concrete roof beams of the new concourse were more than 120' long and supported on just a handful of slim columns. Clerestory windows and glazed upper levels brought daylight and legibility to the area. Engineering necessity was responsible for the near-invisibility of the trains, which ran in below grade. Beyond the glass at ground level is the travel centre.

The public counters of this innovative facility sat beneath a moulded fibrous plaster canopy, a decorative variation of the egg-crate ceiling common to the period.

The ground floor Sprig Buffet, where waitresses served light meals to booths either side of 'runways', was part of a careful hierarchy of eating and drinking spaces on the opposite side of the concourse. It adjoined a snack area and non-alcoholic bar. Upstairs were the formal restaurant, licensed bar and a bookable function room.