# Mail Rail

# Large Print Guide

# Contents

# Interactive exhibit - Battery Loco, 1927

Climb aboard this 90-year-old maintenance locomotive. Engineers would drive this loco along Mail Rail's tracks to deliver equipment, and occasionally recover broken-down trains. Powered by 152 battery cells, it worked independently of the mains electricity that ran the rest of the network. Listen to Engineer Ray Middlesworth as he remembers what it was like to drive the locos.

# London Map wall

**(left to right)**

### Paddington District Office and Station

**1927**

This is where the Post Office (London) Railway was officially opened on 3 December 1927 with postal services starting on 5 December. Running below the Metropolitan and Bakerloo lines of the London Underground, Paddington marks the westbound limit of the railway.

### Western District Parcels Office

**1944**

On 6 December 1944 a V2 rocket damaged the Western Parcels Office, flooding its Mail Rail station. It closed for 3 weeks, the longest period of disruption for the railway during the war.

### Western District Office

**1928**

From 1928 the railway serviced two stations covering the Western District Offices. In 1965 these offices

moved to Rathbone Place, close to the busy Oxford Street.

Unlike the original stations built by widening the existing tunnels, the new box-shaped station was dug out as an additional space within the building's basement.

## Western Central District

### 1928

Western Central District Office station opened on 13 February 1928 and signalled that the network was fully open as letter traffic started to be carried on the railway, as well as parcels.

## Mount Pleasant Sorting Office: You Are Here

### 1917

Since the opening of the railway Mount Pleasant has been at the centre of the bustling network. But even before it opened the station had a role to play. In 1917, during the First World War, the railway's tunnels were used to keep treasures from the British Museum and National Portrait Gallery safe from Zeppelin raids above.

## Eastern Central District King Edward Building

## 1910

In 1910 the new Chief Post Office for London was opened in King Edward Building. The closest tube station to this building, and the GPO Headquarters building opposite, was called ‘Post Office’ from its opening in 1900 until 1937 when it was re-named St. Pauls. King Edward Building closed in 1996.

## Liverpool Street

A system of chutes and conveyors was used to get bags of mail to and from the Post Office Railway to the mainline stations above. There was also a system of signal lights regulating the feeding of mail into the railway. Postmen at Liverpool Street Station would sort the mail bags at the conveyor while keeping an eye on all the signals.

## Eastern Central District

At Whitechapel the Post Office Railway ran under Whitechapel Road, the Royal London Hospital and Whitechapel Underground Station to reach the end of the line at the Eastern District Office. The last postal train ran on the railway on 30 May 2003.

# The Store Room

A treasure-trove of tools kept the railway running. Engineers needed the right tool to help them repair the trains one day, or to make new parts for the mail-handling machines the next.

Machine-tool parts were stored under lock and key for trained operators to access. These devices would cut, grind and shear the metals required to maintain everything in working order.

# Mail Rail Explorer

## An Immersive Experience

Come inside and travel beneath the streets to explore the hidden spaces of Mail Rail.

**Mail Rail Explorer**

**An Immersive Experience**

Discover the hidden world of Mail Rail in this immersive experience. The Mail Rail Explorer offers unique views of the tunnels and platforms as they once were, bringing the railway’s past vividly to life. Designed especially for visitors who cannot or prefer not to travel on the trains, the space is open to everyone.

**Please note:**

- This space contains moving projections that may create a sensation of motion. Changing position may reduce this effect.

10 min

- The film lasts approximately 10 minutes and plays on a continuous loop.

10x

- The recommended capacity is 10 people at a time. Seating is available for those who most need it.

- This space contains an induction loop.

- If you require assistance or have any questions, please speak to a member of The Postal Museum team.

Supported using public funding by Arts Council England

The Mail Rail Explorer has been generously supported by The Post Office Remembrance Fellowship.

The Mail Rail Explorer was created and developed in collaboration with an access advisory group. The group was first formed as part of the Mail Rail for All project in 2018 and has guided both the design of the space and the production of the content.

**The Postal Museum is grateful to the Post Office Remembrance Fellowship**

For their generous support of the Mail Rail Explorer and enhancements to the Mail Rail ride experience.

The Post Office Remembrance Fellowship exists to commemorate those men and women of the General Post Office who gave their lives in the world wars.

**Image above:**

Soldiers sorting mail during the First World War.

**Caution**

**Please do not climb on the barrier**

# Mail Rail Exhibition

**Welcome to the Car Depot**

“As I watched the operations and began to visualise an endless flow of mailbags moving along under the streets of central London, smoothly and efficiently…I began to understand why everyone connected with the Post Office Tube Railway whom I’d met…deservedly spoke of it with pride.”

**From a short article based on a visit to Mount Pleasant station by J.B. McGowen in 1963.**

Busy, noisy, productive…can you imagine this car depot at the height of Mail Rail’s operations? In these unique workshops, dozens of Royal Mail engineers maintained the whole Mail Rail network.

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# John Scott, Electrical Engineer 1972-2003

“By road, you’ve got other cars in front. On the railways, you’ve got nothing in front of you, and the train gets there quicker”

What can you spot inside this engineer’s toolbox? This old mail wagon might have been sent for scrap. But engineer John Scott gave it a new role for carrying all the kit he needed to maintain Mail Rail. We’ve kept it as John did on the last day he used it.

# Object wall - lockers

The Postal Museum recovered these original lockers from Mail Rail. Workers kept a variety of things inside from vital safety clothing to personal mementoes – everything had a special significance.

We've recreated them here for you to explore – what would you keep in a locker to remind you of friends and family?

On the last day the railway ran, 30 May 2003, Ray Middlesworth and his fellow workers left things just as they were.

Try on an overall just like workers would wear to stay safe here in Mail Rail.

At its peak, mail cars ran for 22 hours per day, moving millions of letters and parcels. Your job would have been to load and unload mailbags onto the cars in double-quick time.

## Discover London’s hidden underground

**Image caption:**

Imagine the mail flowing 22 hours per day under the streets of London.

# 1863-1874 - Early Schemes and Pneumatic Car

Long before Mail Rail, the Victorians saw that an underground system could help keep the post moving. Mail first travelled in experimental tunnels about three metres below London's streets, on 20 February 1863.

Metal cars carried the letters and parcels between Euston station and a sorting office in nearby Eversholt Street. The cars ran along rails, propelled by air pressure created by a huge steam-powered fan. The railway operated until 1866 and then again between 1873 and 1874, but the tunnels were later abandoned.

**Image captions:**

Left: A map showing the principal arterial lines of the proposed London Pneumatic Post System, November 1858. By T W Rammells, Engineer.

Right: The first dispatch of mail bags on the pneumatic tube from Eversholt Street to Euston Station was reported here by the Illustrated London News.

"goods vans…shall disappear for ever from the streets of London"

The Times, 1863

# Object plinth - Pneumatic Car, 1863

A survivor from the original pneumatic railway in 1863.

In service until 1866 it then lay hidden until rediscovered in 1930.

2004-0138

# A Victorian Lady Visitor, 1863

“Not only have letters and parcels been transmitted, through the tube but we hear also that a lady, whose courage or rashness – we know not which to call it – astonished all spectators, was actually shot the whole length of the tube, crinoline and all, without injury to person or petticoat.”

The London Journal, 1863

The pneumatic underground railway carried letters across London at up to 40 miles per hour in driverless metal cars. But although the system was officially only for mail, the occasional daredevil Victorian chose to take a ride.

# Interactive exhibit - The Power of Pneumatics

Turn the handle to start the fan and move the train – first one to the top wins!

The fans suck air into the tubes, building pneumatic pressure and pushing the cars along the track.

The first working pneumatic railway prototype was tested at Battersea in 1861. After a successful trial the cast-iron tube sections and steam pump from the system were re-used to construct the Post Office pneumatic railway.

The Post Office pneumatic railway first carried mail in February 1863. It ran from the sorting room at the North West District Office, under Eversholt Street, to beneath platform one at Euston Station – a third of a mile to the south.

The pneumatic railway used steam engines to power giant fans, which drew air out of the end of the tubes.

This created a vacuum which sucked the cars along the tracks at a speed of 30 miles per hour.

In 1895 engineer George Threlfall rediscovered the abandoned pneumatic railway tubes. Threlfall devised a scheme to build an electric railway within the tunnels. His plan ultimately failed, but the idea was eventually realised years later with the construction of Mail Rail.

“We are fast making London a marvellous and unequalled city”

Pneumatic Despatch Company, 1862

# 1927: Birth of the Post Office (London) Railway – later called Mail Rail

London’s streets were so congested by 1909 that mail travelled at less than seven miles per hour. Post Office controller Robert Bruce proposed a new underground railway to speed up deliveries. Unlike the earlier pneumatic system, this railway was electric.

Construction began in 1914. The tunnels were 20 metres below ground and linked major sorting offices directly with mainline railway stations. Specially-designed driverless mail cars ran at up to 30 miles per hour on a 0.6-metre (two foot) gauge railway. After wartime delays, the railway opened in 1927 and ran until 2003, later gaining the name Mail Rail.

**Image captions:**

Left: In 1914, construction work quickly began with workers digging a series of access shafts that would then allow the tunnels to be dug by hand in sections.

Right: The railway connected the main sorting office, here at Mount Pleasant, with mainline railway stations.

# Object plinth - Rail Car, 1927

A fleet of 90 four-wheel rail cars carried the mail in 1927 when the railway opened. The rigid nature of their design meant the wheels rubbed on the rails causing excessive wear. The suggested solution was to create longer trains with separate carriages.

2012-0161/1

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# Herbert Gunton: Chief Engineer, 1909-1934

Born in Manchester in 1874, Herbert Charles Gunton was the power behind the underground railway's electrical systems.

Herbert joined the Post Office as Principal Power Engineer in 1909. He already had experience of supplying electricity to railways in London and Dublin, and to his home city of Manchester.

Power distribution was Herbert's key task but he also oversaw hydraulics, heating, ventilation, conveyors, lifts and lighting. He remained in the role for over 24 years until his retirement, and was awarded an MBE.

# The Great Underground Team

At its peak, the underground mail railway carried 4 million letters every day. A dedicated staff of over 200 people worked in shifts around the clock to keep the system running. From postal staff to cleaners, railway workers to specialist engineers, the in-house team had every skill they needed.

Engineers built and maintained railway equipment in this underground depot. They could make and recycle parts, haul the mail cars up to service them, and prepare to fix or replace parts of the track. They took enormous pride in the efficiency of Mail Rail.

**Image captions**:

Left: Not just responsible for the post, workers also operated the control panel which helped move the trains around the railway.

Right: Postmen loading bags arriving from the conveyor into containers ready to send on the Post Office underground railway, 1935.

# Interactive exhibit - Train to be a Mail Rail Engineer

Have a go at moving the Mail Rail trains round the track in this model of the system.

Mail Rail ran on 440 volts of direct current. A third rail supplied the power, which propelled the mail cars along at 30 miles per hour.

To slow the cars at stations, there was an incline and the power dropped to 150 volts. As the train accelerated down a slope away from the station, the power returned to 440 volts again.

**Use the levers to move the train.**

To move the train from the Platform to the Tunnel, push the yellow lever to ‘Send’ (upwards) and the black lever to ‘Receive’ (downwards).

To move the train from the Tunnel to the Platform push the black lever to ‘Send’ (upwards) and the yellow lever to ‘Receive’ (downwards).

**Left:**

Send

Tunnel

Receive

**Right:**

Send

Platform

Receive

**Please Pull Levers Gently**

Watch out for power cuts. Use this switch to reboot the system.

**Image caption:**

The first purpose-built, driverless electric railway in the world.

# Object plinth - Deconstructed Engine, 1930s

Peer inside this deconstructed engine. Engineers could take apart any motor to repair and replace parts. They constantly re-used materials to adapt and improve the Mail Rail trains and network.

About a dozen engineers work here during the day and two at night. We do almost every sort of job, on the car bodies as well as on the motors – there are very few repairs that our own technicians can’t do right here.

Tony Wilson, Technician, 1987

# Ray Middlesworth, Railway Engineer, 1983 onwards

“Mail Rail was like having your own giant train set to run.”

For over 30 years, Ray Middlesworth has been a Mail Rail engineer. Even after the railway ceased operations in 2003, he stayed on. Over his Mail Rail career, Ray worked to maintain the rail system as part of the close-knit engineering team. He also dealt with many dramatic moments as mail cars sped around the track – as many as 18 at a time. If a faulty train wasn’t moved within five minutes, for example, the whole system came grinding to a halt.

# Engineering and Maintenance

180 mail cars ran on the Post Office railway over its working life. The engineers maintained them using the inspection pit, keeping the system running with remarkably few delays and derailments.

Back in 1930, rail cars were just over eight metres long, each with four containers holding about 15 bags of letters or six bags of parcels. A replacement car design came in during 1980. In 1987, to mark the railway's 60th anniversary, the system was renamed Mail Rail.

**Image captions:**

Left: Here an engineer travels through the tunnels of Mail Rail on a battery powered engineering locomotive. If a train broke down in the tunnel, engineers would use this locomotive to recover and pull a train back to the depot. 1971.

Right: Some repairs, including replacing brake shoes and cleaning, required access underneath the train. Pits were built into the depot where trains could be parked to allow workers access underneath.

# Object plinth - Rail Car, 1930s

In 1930 a new type of train was introduced. Unlike the original trains these were articulated. Trains were now longer and could move round curves more easily. Longer trains also meant more mail containers could be loaded, increasing capacity.

2012-0161/2

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# Evan Evans, The first guv’nor 1925-1928

Evan Evans’s official title was General Manager – but to staff he is still known as the first guv’nor. He came to the Post Office from London Underground in 1925, to help run the new railway.

Immediately he arrived, Evans noticed a problem with the mail train design. He said the car wheels and track would wear out quickly on tight curves – and when the railway opened in 1927 his prediction was correct. By 1930, new trains were in place, made from parts of the original cars, to a design sketched by Evans himself.

# Keeping Track Of The Trains

Underground mail trains had no driver and operated automatically between stations. But postal workers were in charge of each train's route. They controlled the cars using the levers on this switch frame to change the points along the line.

Each station had its own switch frame in a cabin on the platform. Until computerisation in the early 1990s, each station controlled trains on sections of the line east and west, linking up with neighbouring stations. As a precaution trains only left the station when a postal worker pressed a button, and the track ahead was clear. A red light, known as a cherry, showed other postal workers that this train was about to move on.

**Image captions:**

Left: Even after the introduction of computer control, postal workers dispatched each train personally, for safety.

Right: The largest in the system, this switch frame controlled all the rail activity at Mount Pleasant.

# George Gardiner ‘at the Mount’ 1973-1996

George Gardiner worked for the Post Office railway for 23 years. He controlled trains at Mount Pleasant station, answering his cabin telephone with ‘Gardiner at the Mount’.

Always smartly dressed, George worked shifts around the clock. Trains arrived every five minutes, so a prompt dispatch was vital. Mailbags and parcels had to be loaded and unloaded into the correct containers for delivery to particular mainline rail stations, where they were often sorted aboard Travelling Post Office trains.

# Object plinth - Switchframe, 1927

The largest in the system, this switch frame controlled all the rail activity at Mount Pleasant.

2006-0155

**Image caption:**

Workers moved the levers to power the trains, checked the tracks were clear and set the train’s route.

# Interactive exhibit - Work the Switch Frame

Push the Start button below and follow the instructions to move the trains around the Mail Rail network.

Listen out for tips and clues to help you avoid any crashes!

**Lever positions:**

**Neutral**
This is where the levers are placed when they are not in use.
**Check**
This checks the line ahead is clear for the selected train movement.
**Power**
This powers the track to make the selected train movement.

**Glossary:**

**Shunt**

This term is used when a train is moved from one parking place to another.

**Receive**

This term is used when the train moves from the tunnels into the platform.

**Send**

This term is used when the train moves from the platform to the next section of track in the tunnels.

“In the busy period a train remains at the station for only one minute, and in this period the containers have to be withdrawn and the others for dispatch placed on the cars. Postmen also receive the mailbags from the chutes, conveyors and lifts, and divide the bags for dispatch by the train for their various destinations…The work is extremely heavy, arduous and intense…Also the work is carried out under exceptional conditions, which vary from station to station and from one part of a station to another…
The physical discomfort is appreciable…”

The Post, 2 July 1949

# Mail Rail is Born

Sixty years after opening, the underground postal railway celebrated with a new brand. Trains were given a coat of red paint and the whole system was officially renamed Mail Rail.

Soon after, the railway was also computerised. A single control centre ran all the trains from an office nearby in Mount Pleasant, fitted with a bank of monitors. Mail Rail engineers now maintained the computer system as well as the tracks and trains.

But as sorting offices closed and centralised, fewer letters travelled via London. Mail Rail eventually became uneconomical and in 2003 it ceased operations.

**Image captions:**

Left: In 1987 mail trains were painted red to mark the railway's 60th anniversary. Some trains were fitted with red, fibre-glass cowlings as well.

Right: Mail Rail's new brand brought the railway into harmony with the Post Office above ground.

“I worked down there in the 1980s and (then) I see the new trains coming in. Amazing day…”

Tony, Mail Rail team

# Lester Russell, Platform worker 1986-2003

“It was very hard work at times…continental mail used to weigh a ton.”

Lester Russell joined the Post Office railway in his early twenties and stayed for 17 years. He worked six days a week, and within a few months of beginning, could buy a car.

Lester enjoyed the team spirit of the underground mail railway. But the work was physically very hard. His role was to load and unload mail from the train. No matter how many bags of letters arrived down the chute for loading, the train had to leave on time.

# Object plinth - Rail Car, 1980s

The trains introduced in the 1930s continued in use for much of the railway's operation. But by the late 1970s new trains were needed. A fleet of 35 new trains, including this one, were bought modelled on the 1930s design. They were known as Greenbats as the original contract was awarded to Greenwood and Batley.

2008-0079

Conserved by AIM Conservation Grant supported by The Pilgrim Trust.

# Filming on Mail Rail

Atmospheric and evocative, Mail Rail is as memorable for visitors today as it was for its staff. But did you know that it once starred in a Hollywood film? In 1990, scenes from ‘Hudson Hawk’ were set here.

In the movie, Bruce Willis’s character tries to break into the Vatican from a fictional underground railway beneath the city. Mail Rail made the perfect location. During filming, some trains were painted in yellow and white, and the electronic signage was even translated into Latin. Fees from the filming funded children’s Christmas parties.

**Image captions:**

Left: Mail Rail staff created a Christmas scene to remember for the visiting children. They painted these murals showing the 12 days of Christmas on the walls of the tunnels.

Right: Directed and starring Bruce Willis, ‘Hudson Hawk’ featured a fictional underground railway played by Mail Rail.

# Emma Page, Christmas at Mail Rail, 1992

“There was the usual mix of fun and games; races, musical statues and pass the parcel…but here the similarities with parties my friends were attending ended”

Instead Emma and other children took a ride on one of the Mail Rail trains. Usually carrying letters, for one day a year the noise of the trains was drowned out by squeals and giggles of excited children as they took a ride to visit Santa. As they passed through the tunnels Emma remembers shouts of “Look, it’s a Christmas tree – no, it’s a partridge in a pear tree”, filling the tunnel as the children noticed the paintings on the tunnel wall depicting the 12 days of Christmas.

“You could be certain you had seen Santa in a way that nobody else in your class or even your school had ever done!”

# Peculiar Parcels

As the mail cars thundered under London, they carried some unexpected items. Post Office regulations allowed people to send game in the post, including rabbits, as long as they had a neck label and ‘no liquid was likely to exude’.

More controversial was the book ‘Ulysses’ by James Joyce, published in 1920. Banned in the UK as obscene, the book could not legally be sent in the mail. The Post Office intercepted dozens of copies which were then destroyed under the Customs Consolidation Act of 1876. ‘Ulysses’ is now legally available.

**Image captions:**

Left: Huge numbers of tourists sent souvenir smoked herrings from Great Yarmouth, swelling parcel traffic.

Right: Post Office workers had to deal with all kinds of returned parcels – including rabbits.

# Mail by Rail: The Travelling Post Office (TPO)

The Post Office underground railway played a key role in moving mail swiftly to sorting offices. These in turn connected with mainline rail stations, which sent letters all over Britain by train.

Since the early years of the railways in Britain, TPOs – special train carriages dedicated to sorting the mail – have helped speed up the progress of the mail. On board, special teams of postal workers sorted letters on the move. Bags of sorted letters would then be exchanged along the way using mechanical apparatus, with no need to stop.

**Image captions:**

Left: The success of TPOs ensured that they ran from 1838 right through to 2004.

Right: Workers on the TPOs handled huge volumes of mail as letter-writing gained popularity.

# Interactive exhibit - Dress Up as a Travelling Post Office Worker

You need steady feet, good co-ordination and quick hands to work on a Travelling Post Office.

Pop on a dust jacket and cap and step inside to see if you've got what it takes to sort mail on the move.

# Barry Hayward, TPO Worker 1964-1976

It takes a certain kind of person to thrive under the conditions on board the Travelling Post Office (TPO). Thrown from side to side as the train rushed on, the team sorted mail into their different towns.

TPO worker Barry Hayward enjoyed the team’s serious commitment to getting the job done. But there were also lighter moments when colleagues might hop off the train when it paused in a station and run at top speed to the nearest fish and chip shop.

# Interactive exhibit – Travelling Post Office mail sorting

**Step inside the carriage of a Travelling Post Office and have a go at sorting mail on the move.**

Sort the mail by matching the letters to the correct pigeon hole.

Race against the clock and your friends to sort the mail as quickly and accurately as possible.

“In the summer on the London to Edinburgh TPO, schoolchildren used to come down and watch the TPO receive and despatch mail, they used to sit along the fence like crows…and he looked out…they were all waving and he’s waving and he forgot to lower his net and put the pouches out…”

Theo “Geordie” Mountford, Post Office worker on London-York-Edinburgh TPO, mid 1950s

“We’d get flung around a lot and you were constantly bracing yourself against the lurching of the train. You got

used to that, though you never actually liked it! You learned to work around each other, almost like a dance routine.”

Bill Barnet, Sorter on the Great Western TPO, speaking in 2004

**Warning – moving floor**

Mail Rail At The Postal Museum Supported by Royal Mail

# Object plinth - Mail Bag Exchange Apparatus – Trackside Net

The trackside net received leather pouches containing mail bags from a moving Travelling Post Office. Trials of the bag exchange apparatus took place at Boxmoor in May 1838. Used for over 100 years, the final exchange took place at Penrith in October 1971.

E15591/1 Bag Exchange Apparatus, ground net

# Net Apparatus

Travelling Post Offices (TPOs) sorted mail quickly and efficiently. But how could postal workers leave the right bag of mail in the right station – without having to stop the train?

The answer was the net apparatus, used to catch pouches of mail hung outside the TPO. The train could also collect bags of mail using a similar net attached to the outside of the carriage.

**Image captions:**

Left: Here full bags of mail hang on the wayside delivery standard ready to be collected. The receiving net is empty ready to catch bags of mail from the train as it goes past.

Right: A postman fixes a bag of mail to the wayside delivery standard ready for collection by the TPO.

# Bag Exchange

Past bridges and houses, hedges and ditches, the faster the train went, the sooner the mail would be delivered. The Post Office's bag exchange system allowed trains to collect and drop off mailbags without stopping.

Postal workers would pack the mail in a leather pouch, then attach it to the exchange apparatus. As the train went past the bag-catching net, the pouch of letters would be caught and transferred.

**Image captions:**

Left: As the train sped along the tracks, postal workers learnt exactly when to swing out the pole carrying the pouches of mail.

Right: Here a postal worker waits to drop the mail whilst travelling. The empty net is ready to receive more mail to be sorted on the train.

# Object plinth - Mail Bag Exchange Apparatus – Delivery Standards

The trackside delivery standards were used to dispatch leather pouches containing mail bags into a moving Travelling Post Office. Originally in use above ground, this object was erected here with the assistance of the Nene Valley Railway.

E15591/2 Bag Exchange Apparatus, standard

All we need say of the carriages employed in the Mail Service is that they are very long, very dusty and very cold and uncomfortable. The public on gazing at the huge nets with which the carriages are fitted are apt to form the impression that they are provided for the purpose of catching the pigeons with which the Post Office yard abounds. But they are not. They sometimes catch bags and sometimes passengers' heads, but the latter are reported as 'out of course.'

The Post, 31 October 1891

# Interactive exhibit – Explore The Network

**Discover the Mail Rail network's surprising secrets…**

In 2014 ScanLAB Projects used 3D laser scanning technology to document a section of the Mail Rail network. Now you can explore Mail Rail more easily than ever before and discover its hidden secrets…

# What does the future hold?

Since 2003 Mail Rail has lain quiet, without the rumble of the trains on the tracks. There have been many ideas as to how to use the network from a mushroom farm to an underground cycle superhighway.

Now its unique and innovative contribution to our heritage is preserved for future generations. But the story doesn't end here. Mail Rail is just part of a wider story of communication – cross over the road to The Postal Museum to continue your journey into this world of discovery.

**Image captions:**

Left: The exhibition area where you are standing now was used as a scrap metal store after operations ceased.

Right: Rail cars used to be pulled up to the car depot along this track for maintenance and repairs. Now it's the starting point for visitors to journey into the tunnels as they embark on the Mail Rail ride.

# The Controller’s Platform

Mail cars arrived here in the depot for repairs and maintenance. But once they left the electrified track in the tunnels, how did they move around?

If you look up you can see the power cables that supplied the mail cars with electricity. From this raised yellow platform, a controller would move the trains using a lever.

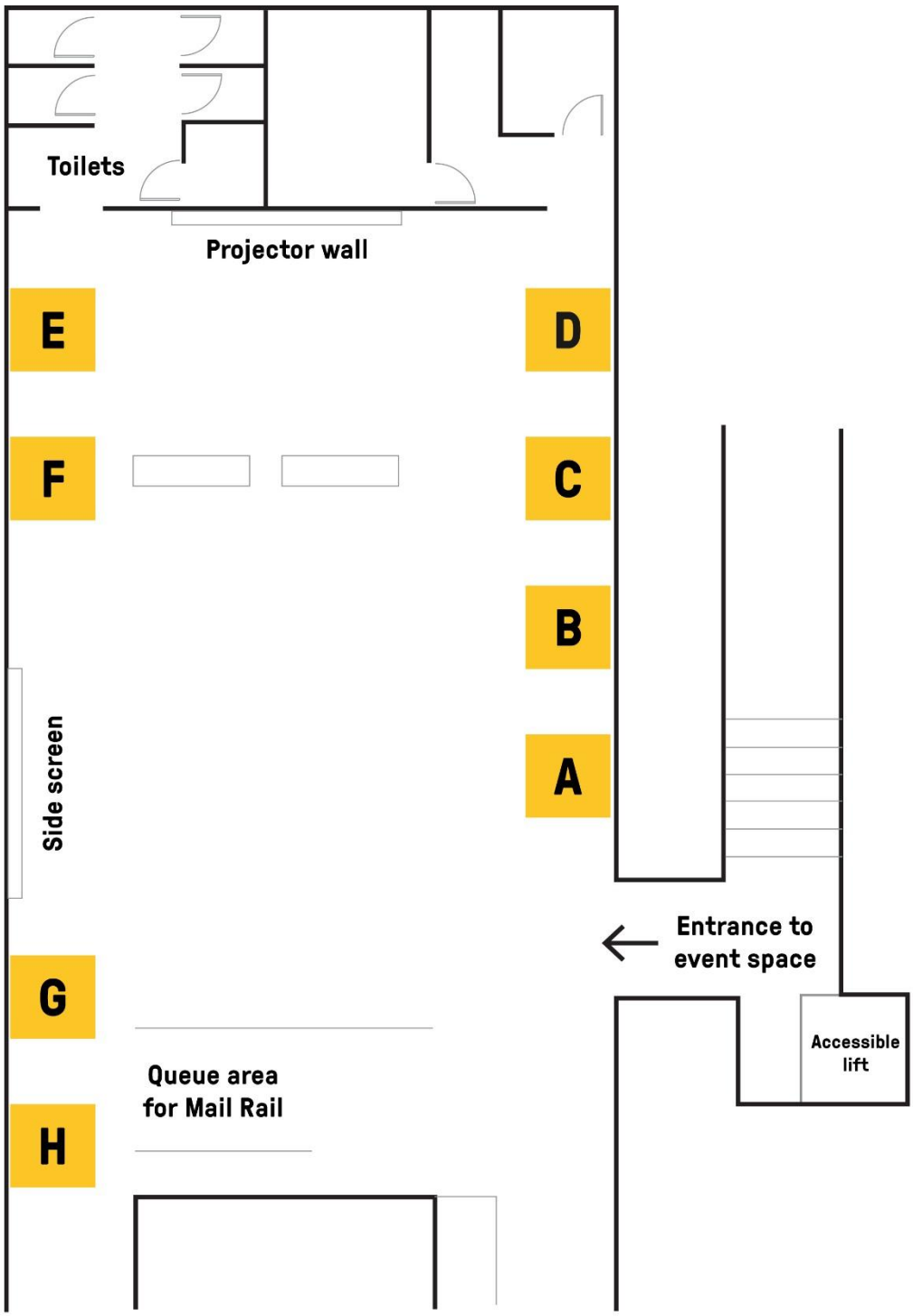
Supported by Heritage of London Trust

# Mail Rail Depot (circulating area)

Over the past years Miles Willis has photographed the trains, platforms and tunnels of Mail Rail that you're about to explore.

From the tools left lying on the ground to the workers' lockers, the results give a glimpse into the atmosphere of the site once operations ceased.

# Map of depot photograph locations



**Photograph captions:**

**A:** Circuit breakers such as this one were used to switch power on and off at Mount Pleasant.

**B:** Under the Mail Rail platforms were a series of rooms used by postal workers and engineers for rest rooms, storage and workshops. Since the railway stopped operating many of these got filled with redundant equipment and some suffered water damage during floods.

**C:** Working on a railway can be a dangerous job. Here engineers are reminded to always put their own safety first.

**D:** This large cabinet held nuts, bolts and screws of almost every shape and size for the engineers to use.

**E:** Trains were stored in the sidings when not in use. Some are still there today, you might be able to glimpse them during your ride.

**F:** Communication was vital to the running of the railway. From these phones in the car depot workers could keep in touch with the rest of the network.

**G:** This welding shed was created as a separate room in the car depot to allow welding to take place safely. When the railway stopped operating one of the battery locos was stored here. You can now see this vehicle on display.

**H:** Mount Pleasant was the longest platform on the railway. With three berths on each side, up to six trains could be loaded with mail at any one time.

Supported by Subterranea Britannica
In memory of Chris Rayner 1954-2017 – Underground Explorer Extraordinaire

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# Supporters of The Postal Museum

**We would like to thank the many individuals and organisations who generously support The Postal Museum**

Royal Mail

Post Office

Supported using public funding by Arts Council England

Made possible with Heritage Fund

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Thank you for the ongoing support of all the Patrons and organisations who support our work.

- David and Susan Gentleman
- Dr Helen Forde
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- Martin Gafsen

- Patrick Maselis
- Sir Donald Brydon CBE
- Blake Envelopes

**Trust & Foundations**

Thank you for the ongoing support of all the Trusts & Foundations who support our work.

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**Supporters of the Opening of The Postal Museum**

Thank you to all the individuals who supported our opening.

- Chris Sheedy
- David and Patricia Buck
- Dr Geoffrey Eibl-Kaye
- Errol Bishop
- Jonathan Evans
- Sergio Barbarino
- Sir Michael Hintze
- Tim Parker

Thank you to all the organisations who supported our opening.

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- Association of British Philatelic Societies & The Philatelic Congress of Great Britain
- Chapman Charitable Trust
- Club de Monte-Carlo de l’Elite de la Philatelie

- Environmental Company
- Grosvenor Philatelic Auctions
- National Federation of SubPostmasters
- Postal History Society
- Subterranea Britannica
- The Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation
- The British Philatelic Trust
- The Charles Hayward Foundation
- The Garfield Weston Foundation
- The Heritage of London Trust
- The Rosemary Green Bequest
- Viridor Credits

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**There's more to see**

Carry on exploring The Postal Museum over the road.