

BUS 140

HEATHROW to HARROW



A celebration to mark route 140's association with Heathrow Airport

What's it all about?

Bus 140 started running to Heathrow Airport when the road tunnel and the first terminal opened in 1955. Then called London Airport, flights had previously operated from the north side of the airport since it opened to passenger traffic in 1946.

As the airport and its connections developed – the tube arrived in 1977 and the Heathrow Express in 1998 – buses and coaches have continued to provide important links from the Central Bus Station. Including the 140 to Harrow.

This changes on 7th December, when route 140 is replaced at Heathrow by express route X140. Today's free heritage buses celebrate the Heathrow service.

Today's free heritage bus service

Organised by London Bus Museum at Brooklands, Surrey, today's free heritage service uses the types of buses that operated route 140 from the early 1950s to the end of the century in 1999 – RTs, Routemasters and Metrobuses.

The free buses run between approximately 1030 and 1700, every 20 minutes over the full route, with some additional shorter journeys. All will carry conductors in the traditional manner, available to provide assistance and advice. They will carry copies of the full timetable.

The service uses buses operated before London's buses became fully accessible, 15 years ago. We regret therefore that wheelchairs, buggies and pushchairs cannot be carried. The full normal 140 service is also running and is, as always, fully accessible.

It is important that we point out that the heritage service is not provided by Transport for London or London Buses and they have no responsibility for it.



An RT leaves Harrow on the Hill on a short journey to Hayes Station in 1978.

Photo © Richard Cripps

All change on the 140

After nearly 70 years serving Heathrow Airport, change comes to the 140 from Saturday 7th December.

The 140 will be shortened to run only between Harrow Weald and Hayes & Harlington Station, with the frequently slightly reduced to every 8 minutes.

New express route X140 will run between Harrow Bus Station and Heathrow Airport Central, running every 12 minutes via the same route as the current 140 (except between Harrow and South Harrow).

The X140 will only stop at Harrow Bus Station, South Harrow station, Northolt Park station, Northolt station, Yeading *White Hart*, Yeading *Willow Tree Lane*, Hayes *The Grapes*, Hayes town centre, Hayes & Harlington station, Harlington Village, Harlington Corner and Heathrow Airport *Central Bus Station*.

Both routes will be operated by Metroline from Harrow Weald Garage, using the current hybrid buses.

Also introduced will be new route 278 running every 12 minutes between Hayes & Harlington Station and Heathrow Airport Central. Other changes will be made to local routes.

Cover picture: RT4779 (planned to be in service today) leaving Mill Hill for Heathrow in 1978.

Photo © Fred Ivey

A brief history of the 140

Dating originally from 1920, when it ran between South Harrow and Stanmore, the 140 had a chequered history of operation in the Harrow and Edgware area until withdrawal in 1927. Re-introduced in a new form in 1932 to run from Colindale via Harrow to Northolt, the route was altered in 1936 to run to Mill Hill.

Meanwhile, the route was extended further south, to Hayes in 1937 and Heathrow Airport (then 'London Airport Central') in 1955. By then, the route was operated by the RT-type bus, a design 80 years old in 2019 and precursor of the Routemaster; several examples of both types are in service today. The last day of RT operation on 14 July 1978 marked the last RTs in west London, replaced by Routemasters for the next five years.

On conversion to one-person operation in 1983, the route was diverted at Harrow to run to Harrow Weald, swapping the eastward section with the 114, which provides the service to Mill Hill today. The 140 from Heathrow to Harrow Weald has continued broadly unchanged since then.

Harrow Weald operated M-class Metrobuses from 1983. London Transport introduced route tendering in 1985; the first tender for the 140 was won by Harrow Buses, a low-cost operation of London Buses, in 1987. Since 1999, the route has been operated by Metroline Harrow Weald Bus Garage, now using diesel/electric hybrid Volvo buses.



An RT alongside a Routemaster at Heathrow Central Bus Station (then with roof) in 1978.

Photo © Fred Ivey

London Bus Museum

London Bus Museum at Brooklands in Surrey holds the largest collection of working former London buses in the world. Open every day (except Christmas), the museum shares the site with Brooklands Museum and one entry covers both museums – buses, racing cars, aircraft and more.

In addition to a display of the history of the London bus, from horse bus to modern one-person operated buses, the Museum has an operating fleet providing bus rides for visitors (summer weekends and school holidays) and operating away from the museum. The fleet includes RT4779, which worked on the 140 on the last day of RT operation and is planned to be in service today.

LondonBusMuseum.com

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