

A Tram to the Lickeys

From 1924 until 1952 the area around you looked very different, for this was the Rednal Tram Terminus – the *Gateway to the Lickey Hills*.

Rednal Trams

Most trams are powered by electricity and run on a two-rail track set in the road. At each end they have driving controls, entrances and stairs on the double deckers.

On the Rednal trams, electricity was collected from an overhead cable by a trolley pole. At the end of the pole was a small, grooved wheel ensuring a good connection with the overhead cable so the current could be carried down to electric motors to turn the wheels.



Original drawing by Brian Gould © 2024

How The Track Worked

The driver had a control lever which he moved up in notches to increase the speed of the tram.

As trams entered the Rednal Terminus the track could be switched to send the tram down a circular looped track or onto a double straight track.

The straight track ①, taken by the every-day service trams, ran down to the terminus buildings, where it curved over onto the parallel track for the return to Birmingham. A section of track is still in place behind the old toilet block ④ to your left.

When the tram was on the return track, the driver would move to the driving position at the other end of the tram, and the tram conductor would use a rope to swivel the trolley pole to the other end of the tram.



Bundy Clock (Wythall Transport Museum)

The circular-looped single track ② was taken by the many extra trams working on bank holidays and other busy weekends. As this track curved round it became the return track to Birmingham, with no need for the driver to change ends or for the pole to be reversed, thus saving time. The longer length of the looped track enabled many trams to wait in line.

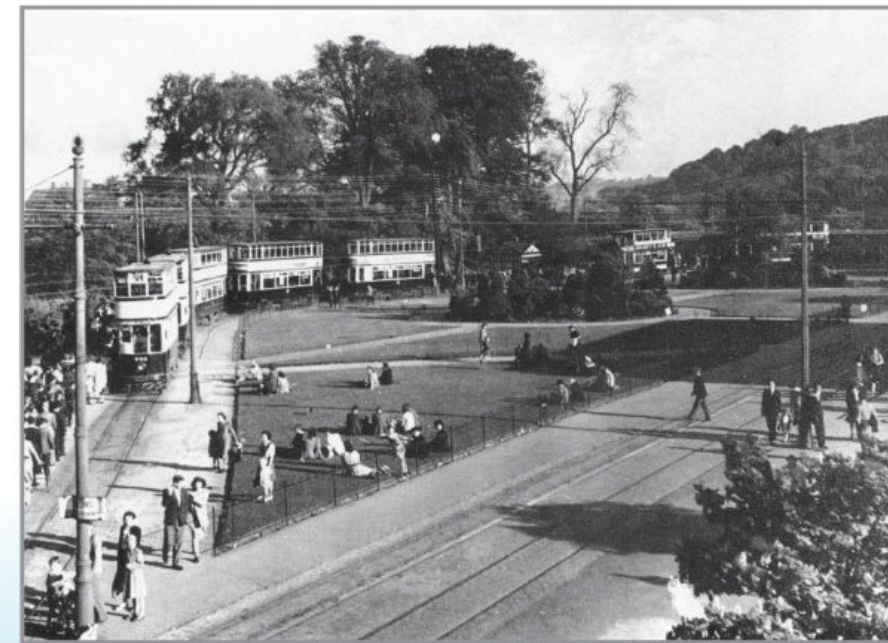
When the tram was ready to depart, the driver inserted a key into a Bundy Clock ③ to record the departure time.

Around you was a looped tram track ② from which trams delivered thousands of Brummies escaping from urban Birmingham for a day out in the fresh air and rural peace of their beloved Lickeys.

Situated nine miles southwest of the City Centre, the Lickey Hills stretch some two miles from Rednal and Rubery in the north, through to Barnt Green in the south.

The Park was created in 1888 when the Society for the Preservation of Open Spaces bought Rednal Hill for the people of Birmingham. By 1922 the other hills had been added, bought by the City of Birmingham and the philanthropic Cadbury family. Today, the Lickey Hills Country Park comprises 524 acres (212 hectares) of woods and heathland rising to 978 feet (298 metres) on Beacon Hill.

The building to the left of you was the terminus public toilet ④ and has since been a visitor centre and a restaurant. The only other structures at the terminus were a long, looped tram shelter ⑤ and the every-day service shelter ⑥ that protected the crowds as they waited to board the return trams to Birmingham centre and a Tudor-styled black and white refreshment kiosk ⑦.



Trams waiting on the circular-looped single track

Running alongside what was originally the toilet block ④ is a section of the tram tracks and setts in their original position ① – a tiny fragment of the many miles of track that used to run throughout Birmingham.

On bank holidays, the entire loop would be lined with trams as Birmingham City Transport put all those available on this, the No.70 route, even during the war years. Some of the older trams had seats on open front and rear balconies for which passengers would scramble on fine days – a good example can be found at Birmingham's Thinktank museum, Millennium Point.

Another Lickey tram route, the No.71, travelled along the A38 to Rubery from where visitors would walk up to Rednal Hill or Beacon Hill.

The advent of mass car ownership and faster, more efficient buses signalled the end of the trams.

Sadly, the last tram left on Saturday 5th July 1952.

The Lickeys still draw and inspire the crowds, and the Lickey Hills Country Park has been regularly voted as the best free day out in the West Midlands.



Up For The Day

The Lickey Hills have been the Brummies' day-out resort for well over a century. The area had many of the features of a seaside resort: across the road were ice cream parlours, tearooms, pubs and amusement arcades ready to satisfy the needs of young and old alike before they ambled off into the peaceful hills and dales or to the funfairs and donkey rides.



Funfair on Warren Lane, Lickey

The Hills were a magnet before the trams. Since 1844, visitors began arriving by train at Barnt Green railway station with bus services to Rednal or Rubery from 1913. Only 11 years later, the numbers greatly increased with the introduction of the trams.



An Edwardian group at Barnt Green railway station

Before, and during the tram era, many visitors cycled here; local cottages would look after bicycles for a small fee, and some also offered B&B accommodation for those wanting a longer stay. However, most visitors came for the day, and it was the trams that, from 1924, provided mass, cheap transportation.



Rednal Tram Terminus c.1930

The journey from Birmingham was a quick 40 minute scenic ride along the pleasant, mostly tree-lined central reservation of the Bristol and Lickey Roads.



The Bristol Road

The
Lickey Hills Society
www.lhs.org.uk Reg.Charity No.1000852



This board was unveiled in spring 2024 to mark the centenary of the first tram to Rednal and the 40th anniversary of the society's formation.



ECO-friendly
frame made
of recycled
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HERE
thelickeyhills.uk

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for giving permission
to site this board



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www.gardnermedia.co.uk

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Can you spot...
the remaining
tram tracks
nearby...

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