

Down Street Station

London Underground's Use in War

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Overview

Down Street Station, founded for the Piccadilly Line of London's Underground, opened in 1907 to very little public commotion. This quiet station subsequently closed after 25 years of use. In the following decade, war broke out in Europe, and Down Street discreetly began to house top secret government groups and highly important people. This project seeks to investigate the daily operations this station hid and the people who made it possible.

In addition, this project wishes to show how strong dedication to the war effort in every minute detail helped to secure victory for Britain.



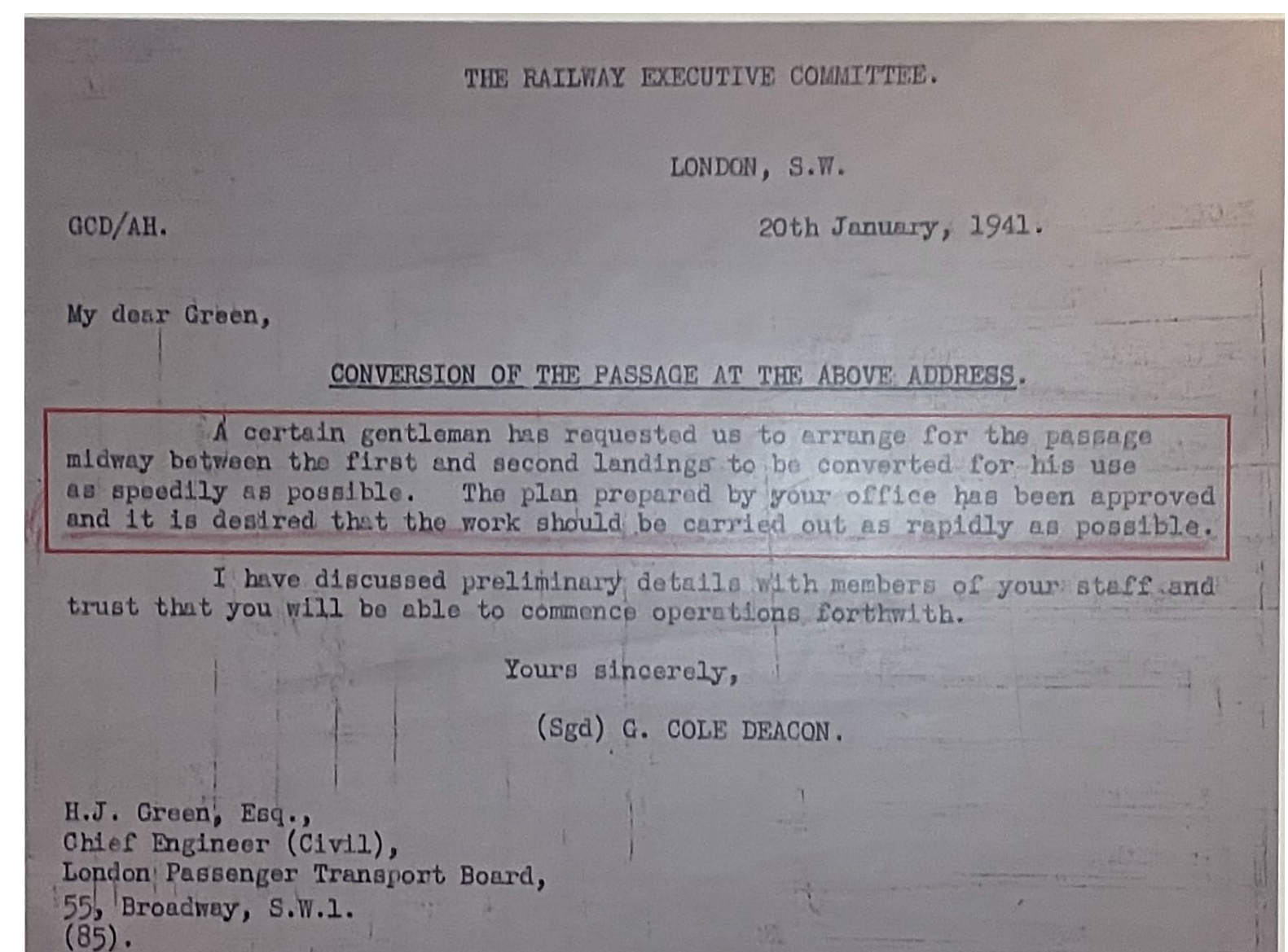
Conclusions

While poorly executed through its short history in the Underground network, Down Street Station served an incredibly important purpose during World War II. The REC's staff of 40 transformed a disused station in Westminster into its secret headquarters sometimes housing high profile visitors. Abandoned since the REC left in 1947, Down Street is remembered for its contribution to the war effort in Britain's finest hour.

Key Findings

While it permanently housed the Railway Executive Committee (REC), Winston Churchill, wartime Prime Minister of the UK, was known to visit Down Street station during the Blitz. Churchill would appear at Down Street almost unannounced and stay for few nights at a time. Churchill looked fondly upon his time there, though it was only intermittent, temporary housing for his cabinet. The REC performed important work from Down Street like managing supply chains during a time where rail lines were a major target for bombings. The REC's work kept British transport of soldiers, guns, supplies, and more alive and running during war.

Visual Evidence



Above: A letter from REC Secretary G Cole Deacon to London Transport Chief Engineer Mr. Green discussing a "certain gentleman's" (Winston Churchill) need to use Down Street.

Left: REC meeting in Down Street tunnels shown by curvature of walls.

Bibliography/References:

- 1 Topical Press. Railway Executive Committee meeting in Down Street Underground station. Photograph. London, April 1940. London.
- 2 Deacon, G Cole. Letter to Mr. Green. "Conversion of the Passage at the Above Address." London, January 20, 1941.
- 3 Nix, Chris, Sidy Holloway, David Bownes, and Sam Mullins. Hidden London: Discovering the forgotten underground. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019.
- 4 Closing of Down Street station. Photograph. London, 1932. London.
- 5 London Transport Museum. "The Secret Wartime History of Down Street Station." London Transport Museum, October 21, 2020. <https://www.ltmuseum.co.uk/collections/stories/war/secret-wartime-history-down-street-station>.

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