

London bus route 65

Ealing Argyle Road - Ealing Broadway - Richmond - Kingston - Hook - Leatherhead



STL381 loads outside the cinema in Clarence Street, Kingston in July 1948 on a short-working to Hook. An RT2 and a roofbox STL are visible in Kingston Bus Station. Photo Alan Cross



Bus route 65 came into being in December 1924, when daily LGOC ('General') route 105^A between Ealing Argyle Road and Leatherhead Bull was renumbered. The routing was via Ealing Broadway, South Ealing, Kew Bridge, Richmond, Kingston, Surbiton, Hook and Chessington. In May 1936, the route was diverted between Kingston and Surbiton to run via Villiers Road instead of direct, replacing the 152 on that section. In August 1939, the route was extended in Leatherhead to run to the L.T. Garage. Apart from some temporary war-time adjustments, the route then continued unchanged until 1966.

Initially operated by NSs from Turnham Green (V) garage, with additional buses on Sundays from either Kingston (K) or Hanwell (Southall, HW) garages, from 1930 the route was shared between V and K. New ST buses were introduced in 1931, and these worked on the route until 1949 when they were replaced by RTs. They were joined briefly on Saturdays by a few LT 6-wheelers from Hammersmith Riverside (R) garage in 1937-8, but otherwise comprised the entire allocation from V and K until the introduction of STLs in 1942. The STLs then formed the largest part of the allocation, but lasted barely longer than the STs, being replaced by RTs in 1950.

Most of the STLs working on the route were of the early 60-seat STL1 type which were being delivered when LGOC became L.T. in 1933, but a minority, as shown in the photo above, were 'leaning-back' STLs dating from 1933-4.



By August 1949, STL59's original 60-seat body had been replaced by this later roof-box body, similar to that on STL2377 at Cobham Bus Museum
 Photo Alan Cross

The 65 was (and is) a busy route. After the war, the weekday requirement was 55 buses (giving a bus every 3 minutes in the peaks), up from 35 before the war, with 65 needed on Sundays. As an example of the mix of buses used in 1949, the Monday to Friday requirement was:

- July 1949: 31 STL, 20 ST (V) plus 5 STL, 3 ST (K) (RTs from V at weekends only)
- October 1949: 25 STL, 26 RTL (V) plus 8 RT (K) (RTLs joined by RTs from V at weekends)
- November 1949: 52 RTL (V) plus 8 RT (K)

As can be seen, V operated both RTLs and RTs in 1949, as a joint AEC and Leyland shed, a situation that lasted until 1951 when the route became RT only (with one exception) until 1975. The exception was a working by one Routemaster off route 131 in 1963/4. The Kingston allocation moved to Norbiton (NB) when that garage opened in 1952, although Kingston RTs reappeared briefly on Saturdays in the winter of 1957/8; in addition, Twickenham (AB) ran RTs at weekends on the 65 and 65^A in 1966/7.

1950 saw the introduction of the 65^A, running daily along the 65 to Chessington, then terminating at Copt Gilders Estate. This was replaced in 1952 by the 265, with a different northern section, but reintroduced on Sundays in 1963. The last day of 1966 saw the 65 replaced by the 65^A at weekends, running to Leatherhead via Copt Gilders; the 65^A was introduced to Chessington Zoo on weekdays, replacing the 265. This lasted until 1968, when the 65 replaced the 65^A, running daily via Copt Gilders and cut back to run only to Chessington Zoo.

Routemasters replaced RTs in 1975, running until OMO conversion in 1986. In 1982, the Argyle Road to Ealing Broadway section was replaced (in part) by the E2 and in 1987 the section south of Kingston by the 71. Today's route between Ealing Broadway and Kingston (Chessington WoA at night; every 7-8 minutes in the peaks) requires 21 buses, with a further 12 for route 71 every 8 minutes between Kingston and Chessington *World of Adventures* (as the zoo is now known).



Newly-overhauled RT990 in 1969 on the revised 65 to Chessington Zoo via Copt Gilders Estate.
 Photo Paul Redmond

Copyright - Paul S A Redmond