

## London Director Exchanges – Transfer to All-figure Numbers (AFNs)

See [Appendix](#) for description of the Director System and [Glossary](#) for technical terms.

### Columns layout:

Name with LETter code – letter equivalent (where different from AFN) – New AFN

NAME	Was	AFN	NAME	Was	AFN	NAME	Was	AFN
ABBey		222	COVent Garden	208	240	FOUntain	308	677
ACOrn	220	992	CREscent	273	550	FOX Lane	309	882
ADDiscombe	233	654	CROydon	270	688	FRAnklin *	372	669
ADVance [formerly BEThnal Green	238	980	CRYstal Palace	279	659	FREmantle		373
ALBert Dock	252	476	CUNningham	286	286	FRObisher		370
ALPeron	257	998	DANson Park	326	304	FULham		385
AMBassador		262	DERwent		337	GALleon	425	330
AMHerst	264	985	DICkens	342	359	GEOrgian	430	579
APPlewood ‡	277	679	DILigence	345	903	GERrard		437
ARChway		272	DIRectory enquiry *	347	192	GIBbon	442	789
ARNold	276	904	DOLlis Hill	305	450	GIPsy Hill	447	670
ATLas	285	568	DOMinion	306	592	GLAdstone		452
AVEnue		283	DREadnought †		373	GLOBe ‡	450	675
BALham ►	225	672	DRUMmond	378	908	GOOdmayes	400	599
BARnet	227	449	DRYden	379	204	GRAngewood		472
BATtersea ►		228	DUChess	382	N/A	GREenwich	473	858
BAYswater		229	DUKe †		385	GRImdsyke	474	954
BECKenham ►	232	650	DUNcan	386	690	GROsvenor	470	499
BELgravia ►		235	EALing	325	567	GULliver		485
BERmondsey		237	EASt	327	987	HADley Green	423	440
BEXleyheath	239	303	EDGware ►	334	952	HAlnault	424	500
BIShopsgate		247	EDMonton ►	336	807	HAMPstead	426	435
BLUebell	258	656	EDWard ‡	339	549	HARrow		427
BOWes Park	209	888	ELGar	354	965	HATch End		428
BRIxton		274	ELMbridge	356	399	HAYes ►	429	573
BRUnswick		278	ELStree	357	953	HEAdquarters		432
BUCKhurst	282	504	ELTham	358	850	HENdon	436	202
BUShey Heath	287	950	EMBerbrook	362	398	HIGHgate Wood		444
BYRon	297	422	EMPress	367	603	HILLside		445
BYWood	299	668	ENField		363	HITher Green ►	448	698
CANonbury		226	ENGineers	364	151	HOGarth	404	749
CENtral ►		236	ENTerprise		368	HOLborn		405
CHAncery		242	EUSon		387	HOP		407
CHerrywood	243	540	EWEll		393	HOUslow	408	570
CHIswick	244	994	FAIrlands ►	324	644	HOWard	409	804
CITy ►		248	FELtham ►	335	890	HUDson	483	572
CLERkenwell		253	FIEld End	343	868	HUNter		486
CLIssold		254	FINchley		346	HURStway	487	462
CLOCKtower	250	552	FITzroy		348	HYDe Park		493
COLindale ►		205	FLAxman		352	ILFord	453	478
CONcord	206	864	FLEet Street ►		353	IMPerial	467	467
COOmbE End	200	949	FLOral	350	878	INF (Enquiries) *	463	191
COPpermill	207	520	FOOTs Cray		300	ISLeworth	475	560
			FORest Hill	307	699	ISMAY	476	640

<b>NAME</b>	<b>Was</b>	<b>AFN</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>Was</b>	<b>AFN</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>Was</b>	<b>AFN</b>
IVAnhoe	482	505	MUSeum	687	636	TABard		822
IVYdale	489	394	NATional		628	TATe Gallery		828
JUBilee ▶	582	960	NEW Cross ▶		639	TCY		829
JUNiper		586	NOBle		602	TEDdington Lock	833	977
KEAts	532	366	NORth		607	TELegrams	835	190
KELvin	535	673	NUFfield	683	848	TEMPle Bar		836
KENsington	536	589	PADdington		723	TERminus		837
KILburn	545	328	PALmers Green	725	886	THORnton Heath ▶	840	684
KINGston-upon Thames		546	PARK		727	TIDeway	843	692
KIPIing ▶	547	857	PECKham Rye		732	TIMe (Speaking clock) *	846	123
KNightsbridge	564	584	PERivale	737	997	TOTtenham		808
LABurnum ▶	522	360	PINner	746	866	TOWnley	809	693
LADbroke	523	969	PLUMstead	757	855	TRAfalgar	872	839
LAGoon ‡	524	390	POLLards ▶	705	764	TREvelyan ▶	873	553
LAKeside	525	947	POPesgrove ▶	707	892	TROjan		870
LANgham	526	580	PRImrose	775	722	TST	878	290
LARKswood		527	PROspect	770	876	TSW		879
LATimer	528	802	PUTney		788	TUDor		883
LEE Green	533	852	RAGlan	724	556	TULse Hill ▶	885	674
LEYtonstone ▶		539	RAVensbourne	728	460	TURnham Green	887	995
LIBerty		542	REDpost		733	TWlckenham Green		894
LIVingstone ▶	548	653	REGent		734	UMP (Cricket score) *	867	160
LOCKwood ▶	502	446	RELiance		735	UNDERhill		863
LONdon Wall	506	588	RENown		736	UPLands	875	660
LORds	507	289	RIChmond (Surrey)	742	940	UPPER Clapton	877	806
LOUghton		508	RIPpleway	747	594	VALentine	825	554
LOWer Hook	509	397	RIVerside		748	VANDyke	826	874
LPR	577	432	RODney		703	VICToria	842	834
LTR		587	ROYal ▶		709	VIGilant	844	642
LUDgate Circus ▶		583	SANderstead *	726	657	VIKING		845
MACaulay		622	SCOTT		720	VIRginia	847	349
MAIda Vale		624	SEVen Kings	738	590	VIVian	848	263
MALden	625	942	SHEpherds Bush		743	WALLington (Surrey) *	925	647
MANsion House		626	SHOreditch	740	739	WANstead	926	989
MARyland	627	534	SHILverthorn	745	529	WARing Park	927	302
MAYfair		629	SKYport		759	WATERloo		928
MEAdway	632	458	SLOane	750	730	WAXlow	929	578
MELville	635	643	SNAresbrook	762	530	WELbeck		935
MERedith		637	SOUthall	708	574	WEMbley	936	902
METropolitan ▶		638	SPArtan	772	249	WESTern ▶		937
MILI Hill	645	959	SPEedwell	773	455	WHIttehall	944	930
MINcing Lane	646	623	SPRINGpark		777	WIDmore	943	464
MITcham		648	STAmford Hill	782	800	WILlesden	945	459
MOLesey	605	979	STEpney Green	783	790	WIMbledon		946
MONarch		606	STOnegrove	780	958	WOOlwich	900	854
MOOrgate ▶		600	STReatham	787	769	WORdsworth ▶		907
MOUntview	608	340	SULlivan	785	799			
MULberry	685	889	SUNnyhill	786	203			
MUNicipal		686	SWIss Cottage		794			
			SYDenham	793	778			

Table sources: Letter codes from London 1965 Dialling Information Booklet (DIB). All-figure Number (AFN) codes from London 1973 DIB.

## Addenda

Some oddments of codes not appearing in either of the published lists above:

LTK (585) Direct dialling in to Kingsway Trunk Exchange PABX.

TMO (860) Telephone Manager's Office

TOL\* (805) Toll calls

TRU\* (878) Trunk calls – replaced by 100\*

All the codes 196, 296, 396 etc were used by automatic test equipment for routine tests on the directors.

## Key to Symbols

**N/A** Exchanges were not shown in the 1973 AFN list, and may have been planned for expansion but never used.

\* signifies dial code only and wait. The exchanges Elmbridge, Franklin, Sanderstead and Wallington, were manual but later converted to automatic working.

► Some customers were transferred from these exchanges and given new telephone numbers. Callers were advised to consult the current directory for the new number.

‡ The Letter code for this exchange disappeared from dialling information booklets, but the AFN translation has been deduced from other evidence.

† DUKe and DREAdnought were used for temporary lines serving exhibitors at Olympia and Earls Court respectively. They were effectively synonym exchanges for FULham and FREmantle having the same numerical equivalent of 385 and 373. DREAdnought changed by 1976 to use code 371, making it a true hypothetical (see [Glossary](#)).

## Background Information

The use of all-figure telephone numbers was announced as a national policy in 1965 and was introduced progressively starting with the major cities using the director system, London, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool and Manchester. The change was complete by 1969.

Telephone penetration in London was growing particularly rapidly in the 1960s and the Post Office was rapidly running out of meaningful letter combinations for its exchange names. Post Office research had shown that strings of numbers were no more difficult to remember than random strings of letters. Removing the constraint of letter combinations with some meaning would allow all 800 combinations of exchange codes from 200 to 999 to be used. Even codes containing the digit 1 could now be used, whereas previously the lack of a letter on the dial for 1 prevented it. However, using codes of X1X and XX1 led to other problems outlined below.

If you examine the table above you will see that the new all-figure codes are frequently *not* the direct equivalent of the letters. And here's the reason why.

A benefit of the major code changes was to enable exchanges to be grouped geographically into sectors. In the past the director system allowed a total separation of the telephone exchange code from its geographical routing. Inside the director area traffic could be concentrated to a geographical area using tandem exchanges. So sectorisation was not a great benefit for calls within the director area. Sectorisation was of principal benefit to incoming and outgoing trunk traffic. Seven Sector

Switching Centres (SSCs) were set up around the periphery of the London Director Area allowing remote exchanges to separate their London-bound traffic by examining the first two digits and to spread the traffic load between the SSCs.

To achieve this, selected exchanges were given new codes different from the equivalent of their letters. Such a sweeping change could not be effected overnight and so it was necessary to keep both the old and new codes working simultaneously for a period of years until all directories had been reprinted and subscribers had got used to the new numbers.

The process was a knotty problem for those in the Post Office planning the number changes. It was compounded by some exchanges reaching capacity so that blocks of numbers were transferred to neighbouring exchanges which still had spare numbers. This explains the exchanges marked with a triangle in the table. See Paul Eblings recollections below.

To read the debate in Parliament in 1967 ([Hansard](#)) one would have thought, from the outpourings of the MP for North Antrim, that the world would end. In the end we all changed over to all-figure numbers without too much fuss.

Paul Ebling has shared some of his memories from the period.

### **Problems with Pre-2000 Directors**

I think the problem was that AFN was originally planned on the basis that B & C digits could take any value in the range 1-9 and 0. It was then discovered that almost all pre-2000 Directors were not wired out to the translation fields for B and C digits of 1. In UPLands there was a frantic job to replace all the Directors with second hand 2000 type – *said* to be because you got twice as many per rack, but really I suspect it was to allow digit 1 to be used as soon as possible. Some later pre-2000 directors were probably modified, but very old kit would not have survived such an operation and so had to be replaced.

The revised planning meant that all units actually open at AFN day had to avoid digit 1 as a B or C digit.

To achieve this a number of things had to happen. One was that DOLLis Hill (GLAdstone second unit), was given 01-450. So GLOBE (q.v.) necessarily was never given to the public for 01-675. The TULse Hill Beta Unit 01-671 did not open until the official AFN launch, and TULse Hill 8XXX numbers were re-used in LETter form as necessary to avoid publishing 01-671 before everyone could dial it successfully.

I suspect that APPLewood, ISMAY, MERedith, VIVian, LOCKwood etc were also “Pulled” and numbers not issued in letter form, being published and used as AFNs once the new translations had been added across London – new lines were given AFNs in advance of the official switch over date, which was when old codes began to be withdrawn. 637 was used for a new unit at PO Tower alongside LANgham and MUSeum. I think it was originally called “UNiversity”, although that does not appear in my 1966 chart.

### **Exchanges marked ►**

**BALham** became 672, but 1500 or so lines were moved to 673 8XXX or 0XXX (an area correction transfer as BALham was exhausted but capacity existed a mile up the road at KELvin)

**BECKenham** 6XXX became 658 and the rest 650 - in preparation for a Beta Unit

**FAIRlands** 2XXX became 641 and the rest 644 - in preparation for a Beta Unit, later realised as a TXK3

**LIVingstone** 9XXX became 771 and the rest 653 - in preparation for a Beta Unit, but the pre-2000 kit existing was VERY old and throwing any extra traffic through the incoming N first numerical selectors would have been asking for trouble. Maybe the whole site was turned round to 2000 type before expansion happened?

**FLEet / LUDgate / CItY / CENtral** were four units based in Faraday with 3-wire junctions to Fleet Building where there were Satellite Exchanges to use the levels not in use in Faraday and where no more accommodation was available. At AFN, there seems to have been a redistribution / rebalancing of levels on the 4 units so some FLEet numbers did not stay as 353, but took one of the other three codes and so on.

**MOO / MON / MET / MIN** were in two buildings off London Wall, and a similar shuffling seems to have happened there, but not involving all four units.

**NEW Cross** probably had lines transferred to PECKham Rye, the second unit

**POLlards** 2XXX became 679 (APPLewood) and the rest 764

**ROYal** spawned three Hypotheticals on codes 48X I believe. Something to do with preparing for an early TXE4 installation? Later ROYal was regarded as hypothetical on one of its offspring.

**THORnton Heath** had a second unit on 689 whilst most lines went to 684. I suspect it was a Beta Unit, but I am unsure of which level it was on.

**TULse Hill** 8XXX became 671 and the rest 674 - in preparation for a Beta Unit.

Paul wonders if anyone else knows the rest of this story - or can clarify any of his doubts?

## Glossary

<b>2000 type</b>	The type of exchange switching equipment standardised by the Post Office in the 1930s. Older exchanges with pre-2000 equipment remained as part of the telephone network.
<b>A, B, and C digits</b>	The three digits of a Director exchange code in order. E.g. for MAYfair the A digit is 6, the B digit is 2 and the C digit is 9.
<b>Beta Unit:</b>	A Second Unit (see below) in a Director exchange sharing the connections to and from the existing unit, and sharing common services. The existing unit retained 4 digit numbers. However, for engineering purposes the Beta Unit had FIVE digit numbers, only the last four being printed in the Directory and on the customers' dial labels. The Beta unit was given a separate Identity i.e. AFN code, and when callers used that code the Director's Translation provided necessary routing followed by the prefix digit to make up the 5-digit number.
<b>Hypothetical unit</b>	A group of numbers on a Director exchange which were allocated a separate exchange code – usually in preparation for them to be fully separated later as a Second Unit
<b>Second Unit</b>	Another exchange housed in the same building as the primary one.
<b>Tandem</b>	An exchange without subscribers that serves to switch calls between other exchanges.
<b>TXE</b>	An electronic cross-point exchange
<b>TXK</b>	A Crossbar exchange

## **Appendix: The Director System**

In Britain the majority of the telephone network used direct correspondence between the digits dialled by the caller and the routing taken by the call through the network. However in London and five major cities Birmingham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool and Manchester, a scheme of translation was employed to cope with the large number of telephone exchanges in a small area. This was called the Director System.

Telephone numbers consisted of a three figure exchange code in letter format, eg ABB (or 222) for the exchange Abbey, followed by a four figure number. The digits dialled by the caller were stored. The exchange code was translated into routing digits by a piece of equipment called a Director which sent them to the network to connect to the required exchange. Only then were the final four digits sent to the network to connect to the required number.