



... there will be children of all ages around.



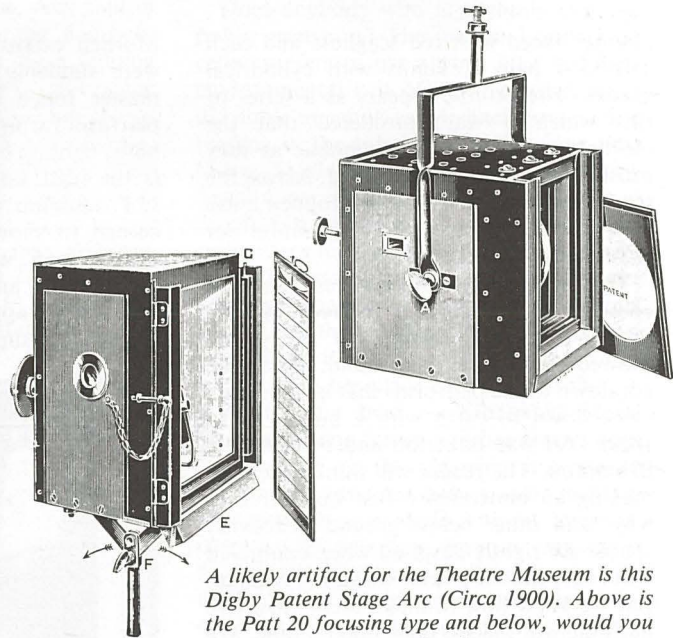
The gaps are well filled by models.

Eventually numbers, as always, took over and the way was clear to replace the bell-punch by the dial-a-number machine with its indecipherable flimsies torn from a ticket-roll. Who would want to collect them! I doubt if a dialling conductor is any faster than his punching predecessor but accounting is another matter. Not only did the conductor have to make a detailed return but girls (men were no good at it) had to sort and check the minute colour circles emptied from the bell-punches.

I wish all museum curators would get it into their heads, as those here have done, that the artifact itself exudes an authenticity which talks directly to the visitor. Only a contemporary photograph can approach it and then it must not be blown up or otherwise fooled around with. In the present case, there it is: just a piece of wood with a rib along the back and some rather crude spring clips. It is not even stained or painted. Yet no willow pattern plate can be more evocative of the period. A period when the trams and trains all bore liveries which involved a lot of careful paintwork,

lining and lettering. And on the wall above there is an actual conductor's return sheet with an archive photograph of a girl sorting out the dots. What more can you want? Well, if you want to climb on the open top of a bus and remind yourself, or just see, those aprons we had to hook back on a rainy day, you can. But you can't 'strike hard' that knob thing to stop the bus *before* descending the steps.

Also one can't step on the tram driver's football. An accident which sometimes happened when about to alight after 'the car has stopped'. The museum authority has of course realised that there will be children of all ages around! But everything else is there ready to drive the tram away including that slender polished brass handle which the driver with hand encased in giant glove used to wind up interminably to slow down or stop. There were magnetic brakes but he seldom seemed to use them. Perhaps he held modern machinery for *his* stages in a proper contempt. Anyhow, below his platform is that intriguing cow-catcher contraption to scoop you up instead of



A likely artifact for the Theatre Museum is this Digby Patent Stage Arc (Circa 1900). Above is the Patt 20 focusing type and below, would you believe it, the Patt 23 flooding type.

wheeling you down. No such precaution has been seen on any vehicle for decades. It is as if the pneumatic tyre has been relied upon to cushion the blow. One can examine in artifact and model the very expensive conduit system which fed the tram from plough and slot between the rails and prevented the streets of central London being disfigured by overhead wires.

One very small criticism: I wish the automatic slide displays gave some idea of the total running time before repeat. Quite properly a time switch shuts the things down at short intervals to keep the general public moving. A few stations go a very long way with them, for example. But the specialist moves away only to be recalled for further transports when someone else presses the Start button.

So well done, London Transport.

I hope it will inspire and encourage some practical planning for our own Theatre Museum. We shall continue to travel hopefully.