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# JOURNAL

No 70

November 2012

[www.rrtha.org.uk](http://www.rrtha.org.uk)

## BUS & COACH ROAD TESTING on 'Motor Transport' - Ian Yearsley

*(This is an edited version of the presentation given at the 19<sup>th</sup> March 2011 R&RTHA meeting at Coventry)*

My remit today is to talk about bus and coach road testing on the weekly trade newspaper *Motor Transport*. I am certainly not going to attempt a complete history of journalistic road testing, though I shall try to provide some context for what I say. But most of my remarks will be based on my own experiences during the time I was Bus and Coach Editor of *Motor Transport*, from January 1975 to May 1986, and the experiences gained and opinions of my colleagues at that time.

### Early developments

Road tests appear to have developed from the 'Critical Reviews of Chassis' that were published in the trade press from the early 1920s, in which a detailed engineering description would be supported by detailed perspective drawings and -

sometimes by cutaway drawings by specialist artists such as Walkden Fisher. These cutaways were wonderful and informative, but sadly, very expensive to produce. Sometime about 1930, these static descriptions were developed into driving experiences and they became the on-the-road tests. Some remarkable characters emerged among the journalists, in particular Major Richard Twelvetrees, who went about dressed as if for the golf course, in plus-four trousers and a huge flat cap. There's a picture of him going around AEC's factory dressed like this in one of Alan Townsin's books, *Blue Triangle, AEC Buses*.

But at this stage, journalists did not drive the vehicles. 'Vehicles' at that time meant bare chassis, and they would be driven by the manufacturer's own test driver. Journalists like Major Twelvetrees would follow behind in a car stopping at intervals to ask: "How many times did you change gear on that hill, my man?" It was only after the Second World War that journalists themselves started to do the driving. By the time I arrived, a very clear pattern had grown up, so much so that I was told "you really won't see much change, everything has been laid down". And that is when change really started to happen.

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ISSN: 2044-7442

**Procedures in the 1970s**

By the mid-1970s a full road test was a two-day event. Myself and a member of our technical office staff plus the photographer would drive out to the first service centre on the M1, and there we would meet representatives of the manufacturer whose vehicle was being tested. By then we always tested complete vehicles, not bare chassis, so there might be coachbuilder's representatives as well as chassis builder with us. The manufacturer would already have loaded the vehicle with sandbags to represent a full complement of passengers, minus the number of people we had on board.

We would then begin a long day's journey, up the M1 to Crick, then on the A5 and the A6 to just south of Manchester, then over the Snake Pass to the outskirts of Sheffield, and we would stay for the night at Anston where the vehicle could be put in a secure coach park. Next day we would head south again by the M1 and class A roads to the Motor Industry Research Association's Proving Ground at Higham on the Hill, near Nuneaton. This establishment, known to all of us as MIRA, had test tracks for high and medium speed endurance trials, and a whole series of driving experiences such as reverse cambers, hump bridges and Belgian pave. There were test gradients for hill-start tests, a weighbridge, and a clear stretch of road for brake tests.

MIRA was by no means the only test track, Chobham was another, various manufacturers had their own tracks, and there were places like Santa Pod race track. Even West Midlands Passenger Transport had their own small figure-of-eight track at Perry Barr. But MIRA was the one we usually used.

A large part of our second day would be taken up in using the MIRA facilities. Brake tests were done with Tapley meter, which records acceleration and deceleration, and with a chalk-gun and measuring tape. The chalk gun was clamped to the underside of the brake pedal linkage, so that as soon as it was applied, a chalk pellet would be fired at the road. We could then measure the distance between the chalk mark and where the vehicle had come to a stop. We had to have an explosives' licence for all this: when we came to move offices from Dorset

House to Sutton in 1980 our administration could not understand why we needed a secure metal cabinet for explosives in the new office!

Driving was always done by one of our staff, but not by me, because I did not then have a driving licence. Nevertheless, I was in charge of the operation, and I quickly found that for buses and coaches, at least 70% of the tests could be done without sitting in the driving seat, and for buses more than 50% of the test could be done with the vehicle standing still. I became adept at using the Department of Transport's PSV inspection manual.

### **Emerging problems**

I also became aware that some problems were looming on the horizon. The first was with the new generation of high-floor coaches. These were starting to appear on the European mainland and the first British ones were built by Plaxton of Scarborough. They simply jacked up their existing coach body by about ten inches, giving more luggage space below. They called the result the 'Plaxton Viewmaster', and one of the first examples was built on a Leyland Leopard chassis for Tatlocks of Radcliffe, near Manchester. We tested it, with Mike Cunningham driving, and it was good, but we weren't entirely happy with its suspension for a body of this height.

The Volvo B58 was the predecessor of the B10M mid-engined chassis and in 1977 Plaxtons built some Viewmaster B58s for Parks of Hamilton. These had a problem: they wouldn't pass the tilt test. Volvo engineers solved the problem creatively by fitting them with an unusually large screen washer tank, mounted low down in the chassis. I understand that it was a thirteen-gallon screen washer tank, no less.

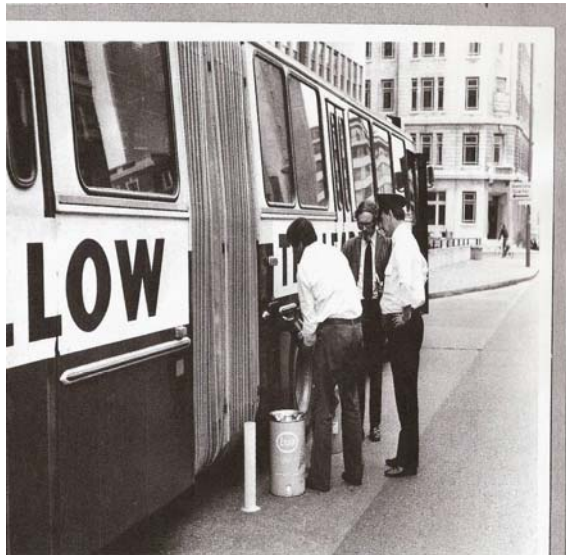
I mentioned that we loaded vehicles with sandbags, and there was always the problem of what to do with all this sand afterwards: those of us with children acquired quite outstanding sandpits for our gardens! Later on we changed to jerrycans filled with water. All this made us increasingly aware of the problem of weights. How do we load a coach to give fair comparisons? Our first idea was to represent passengers at 16 to the ton, plus luggage. But how much luggage? We tried loading a coach

with 33 lbs per passenger, the airlines' luggage allowance for domestic flights. We put it on the weighbridge at MIRA, and found we had exceeded its plated weight limit, both for the rear axle and for the coach as a whole. We did not publish anything, but shared with our industry friends the fact that there was a problem. There were, it emerged, quite a few coaches going round that were over the limit. For our own tests, to be fair to everyone, we simply loaded up to the plated limit. Then we found there was a growing problem of overloading with coaches going over to supermarkets in France for booze. So then we did publish the story and some official action followed.

### **Testing for local bus operations**

So for the time being we'd sorted out the coaches, but were aware that our long-haul route round the country was not an appropriate test for a bus that would spend its time in stop-start operations. I therefore began to look for an appropriate test route for stage buses. Being an unreconstructed tramway man, I naturally turned to some of the historic tram routes that had been converted to buses in the 1930s. Manchester's route 53 was my first thought: it was wonderful – it offered just about every variety of experience and hazard that an urban bus driver might have to face. The big problem was that it was a long way from MIRA: there would be a lot of dead mileage to account for.

So we found the answer nearer to hand: Birmingham to Dudley, out via West Bromwich and back via Oldbury and Smethwick. Everything the 53 had to offer, plus hump-backed canal bridges, and West Midlands Passenger Transport were willing to lend us an inspector for the day each time to make sure we observed their stops and kept to their schedules. We got to know and value the help of an inspector, Trevor Scaife, who guided us through their road system with a variety of vehicles, including in August 1978 a Volvo B10M Stockholm articulated bus on which we had to carry a whole file of temporary permits from chief constables because at that time such long vehicles were not generally permitted in this country. The passengers waiting at the stops did not think much of it, a vehicle twice as long as usual with no doors on their side for them to get in.



Above: Before its Birmingham road test on 23 August 1978, Motor Transport's Mike Cunningham loads on a measured quantity of diesel fuel into Stockholm Volvo B10M articulated bus. Watching him are Bus & Coach Editor Ian Yearsley and West Midlands PTE Inspector Trevor Scaife.

Although I did not drive I was nonetheless able to prove to my colleagues that there were many things about buses in particular which I would spot that they would miss. On one occasion I was with one of the engineers of Trent Motor Traction. He told me that they had a problem with Ford R-series front-engine buses – the starter motors kept on burning out. I volunteered to go out as a passenger on one of them to see what happened. I noticed that whenever passengers got on, the driver turned the engine off and then started it again. If at any stop passengers only got off, he kept the engine running. The problem was with the inadequate sound-proofing of the engine: the driver could not hear what people were saying to ask for their fares, so he switched the engine off each time. No ordinary engineering tests would have disclosed this.

### Journalists as drivers

But as well as technical office staff I did have several Bus and Coach colleagues who were drivers: Tony Pattison had a PSV licence and Victoria Osborne was able to drive minibuses. Victoria was I think the first woman journalist in this country to do road tests of commercial vehicles, and she went on to do even more exciting things with Commercial Motor. Perhaps it was just as well I did not drive – when eventually I did take the test the examiner said to me *"Well, you're pretty ropery,*

*but I can't actually find anything to fail you on, so you're passed."* There was, however, one occasion on which I conducted a bus in public service, and two on which I drove trams on tests.

When the Conservatives took power in 1979 one of their early actions was to abolish the need for conductors to hold licences. I therefore applied for and obtained conductor's licence, N132170, and on the very last day of licensing I conducted the 1925 Dennis open top belonging to Prince Marshall's Obsolete Fleet on the route between Oxford Circus and the London Transport Museum in Covent Garden. This vehicle had a top speed of 20 mph, and on the run from Nunhead garage everything was overtaking us. But once in central London we had no difficulty in keeping up with the traffic. I did on my own initiative impose a no-standing rule on this vehicle; the clutch was so fierce that any standing passengers would have ended up on the floor.

The first of the tram tests was late in 1978, when we tested their trams at the National Tramway Museum as part of the 50 year celebrations of *Bus and Coach*. This was published as part of a 12-page Jubilee supplement on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1979. The second time was more of driving appraisal than a full test, this was with the preserved Bolton 66 as part of Blackpool's Tramway Centenary celebrations in 1985: I drove it from Bispham to Littler Bispham and back before the air brakes were fitted. So I drove it in traditional style, with the handbrake only, rather the tramway equivalent of driving a sports car.

### Did things ever go wrong?

Did things ever go wrong with tests? Yes, they did. The very first test I ever did was of a Duple Dominant bus-bodied Ford R-series, and various people came along to see how it was done, including my then assistant, Peter Stonham, and Duple's representative, Martin Montano. Peter Wallage was driving, and almost immediately remarked on what he thought was the back-axle whine; *"Just like a Bedford OB!"* several people said. The Ford engineers looked unhappy, but said nothing. About six miles down the road, Peter Wallage pulled into the side and said *"I'm sorry, I \*can't go any further, I can't move the gear lever"*. The

Ford engineers rushed to the rescue, but they couldn't move it either, so the test was abandoned until a later date. It later transpired that the night shift had prepared the vehicle for the test and had left a note saying "gear oil drained". The day shift had read this as "gear oil changed". Hence the noise; we had been driving a vehicle with no oil in its gearbox and the surprising thing was that it got as far as it did.

Much later on, in the 1980s, we were heading south on the M1 with a Plaxton Supreme-bodied Volvo when we ran out of fuel in the fast lane. Mike Cunningham was driving, and his immediate reaction was to turn off the engine. This has the effect of locking the steering, which is not a good thing to do at 70 mph in the fast lane of the motorway, so he quickly turned it on again, and then used the momentum we had to steer across the lanes to the hard shoulder. This was in the days before mobile phones, and we had to wait for our photographer, Alan Woodcock, to find us. He then took a jerrycan to the nearest service area to bring us some diesel. The problem then was trying to pour fuel into a filler cap with traffic whizzing past only inches behind your back, and at the same time trying to keep an accurate measure of it all, because unless we had a fuel meter inserted in the system, the fuel consumption figure depended on that.

There was also an incident when we were testing a MAN articulated bus on the West Midlands route, and our driver went over a hump bridge at considerable speed. I was seated in the back seat, and was catapulted towards the roof of the vehicle. This demonstrated what can happen when you have people who are essentially commercial truck drivers, driving passenger vehicles. Goods don't usually complain about being catapulted into the air, but passengers do.

### **The role of colleagues**

There's a lot more I could say about the work that Tony Pattison, Victoria Osborne and others did on minibuses, but I do want to thank them and others, particularly John Parsons, Mike Cunningham, Peter Wallage, John Barras, Eric Willoughby and Alan Woodcock of Motor Transport staff, also freelancers Alan Townsin, Alan Bunting and Bill Godwin, and not least my secretary Lynne MacDiarmid, who

manned the telephone and managed to hold all these things together.

Did we ever seriously criticise a vehicle we tested? There was an occasion when an operator asked us urgently to inspect a new vehicle just delivered by a manufacturer. Using the PSV Inspection Manual, I counted 32 faults on it. I rang the manufacturer's press officer, and told him that I had seen the vehicle unofficially and on that basis I was not going to write anything about it. But if it did come before me officially still in that state I would throw the book at it. A day later the manufacturer phoned to thank me, saying that somehow it had slipped through quality control. They were as horrified as I was at what they found, and thanked us for the opportunity to put it right.

### **Concluding thoughts**

Road testing of vehicles by the British trade press is on the whole good, thorough, and informative. The Australian trade press does a much more lavish presentation, but there is usually much less hard information. German road testing tends to be stage-managed by the manufacturers. In this country the journalists themselves exercise a great deal of initiative in road testing. Although vehicles are offered for test by manufacturers, tests are also set up by the press. We once set up a comparative test of five different bodies on the Ford A-series midibus chassis, and one of the bodybuilders, having seen the strength of the competition, promptly withdrew the model from his list.

What was it all for? After I'd been doing this for about five years I was asked to produce a Mission Statement for Road Testing, and I started off by adapting some words of London Transport's Frank Pick. I said: "*The aim of a Motor Transport Bus and Coach road test is to identify the fitness for purpose and value for money of the vehicle being tested.*" We were concerned about whole-life qualities, not just the immediate result. So we took into account accessibility for maintenance and the availability of spares. We tried to give a picture of the total-life-cost of the vehicle, not just its immediate purchase price. That is what we aimed to do: I hope we succeeded.

*Copyright © Ian Armour Yearsley March 2011*

# WALES ON WHEELS 2013

**The R&RTHA Spring Conference**  
*to be held at the*  
**National Waterfront Museum Swansea**  
**Friday 17<sup>th</sup> May and Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2013**



The museum, (logo above), specialising in industrial history, is the newest member of the National Museum of Wales ([www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/swansea](http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/swansea)).

Accommodation is in the seafront Marriott hotel, just five minutes' walk from the museum.

The museum, with typical enthusiasm, have seized on our request to host the conference and taken the opportunity to celebrate *Wales on Wheels*. The Association will have a room upstairs with a view over the marina for our proceedings, with the keynote talk on Saturday afternoon in the larger Gallery. The rest of the museum will be given over to displays, exhibitions and activities.

*Wales on Wheels* will of course be open to the public, some of whom we hope will develop an interest in the Association.

The provisional schedule for the two days is:

## FRIDAY

Welcome and lunch.  
Visit to the Swansea Museum reserve collection  
R&RTHA evening reception on the museum balcony.  
R&RTHA dinner at the Marriott.

## SATURDAY

R&RTHA and other talks (suggestions for speakers welcomed).  
Keynote speaker Peter Hendy, Transport Commissioner for London, in the afternoon.

*(Saturday, continued)*

Live running, including the museum's replica of Richard Trevithick's Penydarren. Lorries, buses, fire engines, kids activities, exhibitions, radio control cars, C5 'have a go', solar powered vehicle, trams, motor bikes, 'Babs' land speed record car (Pendine 1926), live steam, Swansea Metropolitan University motor design show, and many more.

Likely participants in the two day event include the Roads & Road Transport History Association, National Waterfront Museum, National Museum of Wales, Swansea Museum, Swansea University, Swansea Metropolitan University, Swansea Bus Museum, Welsh Area Fire Engine Restoration Society, the Gilbern Club, London Bus Museum and of course many more!

I have collaborated with the National Waterfront Museum on a number of events for the Swansea Branch of the Historical Association. The venue is world class, and the staff a pleasure to work with.

Please let me know informally if you are interested in attending so I can start on the arrangements. A booking form will be distributed with the next Journal.

*John Ashley*

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0770 9900 788

## ASSOCIATION MATTERS

**Our next event will be the**

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2013**

**To be held at Coventry Transport Museum. The day's proceedings, commencing at 11am will include a guided tour of the Museum, to bring members up to date with recent developments, as well as additional presentations.**

## *From the Chairman*

### **Autumn Meeting**

From comments offered it seems that most attending the Autumn Annual Dinner and Conference enjoyed themselves, reporting favourably upon the excellence of the four presentations, the convivial atmosphere, the solicitude of the Ramada Hotel and the special contribution made by John Ashley, our new Events Organizer, at his very first meeting. Attendance exceeded that of the recent past. It was especially pleasing that some who had not attended recently had made the special effort to join us this year, amongst whom was Gordon Knowles, whose kindly advice was so very much valued. Our principal speakers, whose reception could not have been more appreciative, generously responded by assenting to become members.

### **Swansea Metropolitan**

Subsequent to the report in August, I have conferred further with David Warner of Swansea Metropolitan University. The merger with University of Wales Trinity Saint David is on track and though reorganization necessarily takes place, the link with the Association is still very much sought. The University plans to provide two workshop sessions at our major Swansea event, *Wales on Wheels*, 17/18 May [the subject of a separate *Journal* item], a small base in the reorganized library for the Association, and has even very generously offered to print the *Journal* at minimal cost.

### **Treasurer**

John Howie, who has a very full plate with his various transport portfolios, has given notice that he wishes to resign as Treasurer at the next AGM. Philip Kirk and I are delighted to report that Royston Fisher, who has recently become a member and who attended the Autumn meeting, has agreed to take on this task. John Howie is briefing Royston as to the duties of the post.

### **Publications**

Plans are proceeding satisfactorily for the publication of *The Companion of Road Passenger Transport* with a view to a launch early next year.

As already reported, a costings plan, based upon estimated sales, delivery, advertising and printing costs, has been agreed between Ken Swallow and Martin Higginson, representing the editorial team, and John Howie, our Treasurer. Discussions are taking place with our printers to finalise illustrations and to establish a date by which printed supplies will be ready. Thereafter a date will be fixed for the official launch, a major event in the life of the Association, with special guest speakers, probably in London.

A subsequent publishing project, under consideration, is Nigel Furness' *The Tilling Group History*. The draft text is currently being read by the Committee and it is anticipated that the next steps will be determined at its meeting in Oxford on 30 November. At the Autumn Conference, it was suggested by members, who were also committee members of the Omnibus Society's Provincial Historical Research Group [PHRG], that we should consider taking forward this project in collaboration with the Group.

### **Publicity**

As earlier reported, the Committee had identified, as a priority, reissuing the membership brochure as a means of recruiting additional members. An 'emergency' supply was duly distributed by John Ashley at the Autumn meeting with the injunction that each present should now seek to enrol at least one person! The Committee intends to review its recruiting arrangements with a view to increasingly considerably its membership.

### **Collaboration**

Exploring opportunities for collaboration, discussions have been initiated with various individuals and 'sister' organizations. Of their nature, they have been serendipitous, arising from no strategic committee analysis! Perhaps foremost, and taking advantage of common membership of the Reform Club, I had a most enjoyable and constructive session over dinner with Peter Hendy, London's Commissioner for Transport, days after TfL's triumph at the Games. Peter has very generously agreed to address our Swansea event [17/18 May] and has urged us to consider collaborating with the London Transport Museum,

in Covent Garden, with a view to holding a similar event in central London. He was very supportive of the Association's broad mission and undertook to enlist in the cause his close colleague, Leon Daniels.

Revisiting Brooklands, I was able to see the newly transplanted London Bus Museum [from Cobham]. In the course of a fascinating inspection of the new premises, I conferred with Steve Edmunds, Human Resources Trustee of the London Bus Preservation Trust. This led to a meeting in London where Peter Duplock, Chairman, and Steve, representing the Trust, and I and John Ashley, on behalf of the Association, explored the possibility of our two organizations collaborating. We agreed that our respective committees be asked to consider a number of initiatives: advertising each other's events in publications and web sites, publishing relevant articles in each other's journals/web sites, nominating a committee member to be the point of contact, and collaborating in the promotion of an event based on Brooklands. Subsequently, my wife and I attended the Trust's splendid *Transport Fest 2012* on October 21<sup>st</sup> (see illustrations on back page). Whilst there the opportunity arose to confer with Barry Le Jeune, Chairman, London Transport Museum Friends and a Vice President of the Omnibus Society. Needless to say, reference was made to our deliberations with Peter Hendy with a view to future co-operation.

In the same vein, but this time by e-mail alone, discussions have been initiated with officers of *Buses Worldwide*. Again, the same sympathetic response has been immediately forthcoming, the matter now falling to be considered by committee. As in the observation of a member of the PHRG, it may be a case of a general recognition: 'we're a relatively small group overall: we shouldn't be competing with one another...'

*Bob McCloy, 24 October, 2012*



**The next issue will be that for FEBRUARY  
Contributions should reach the editor by  
1<sup>st</sup> February 2013.**

## ✉ YOUR LETTERS

### **Royal Mail Armed Guards**

Readers of the article in 69 about the Royal Mail Parcel Coach may have noted that the Guard thereof was armed. Whilst all too familiar with the 'Blunderbus' armed guard that featured on the Royal Mail coaches of earlier years, surely it is curious it was being perpetuated late in the 19<sup>th</sup> C? Highway robbery had long since ceased to be a crime of major significance by this period and the decision not to routinely arm our police force already accepted practice. The Post Office itself had not seen it necessary to provide armed guards when the switch was made to rail (had they done so events of 1963 may have taken a different turn!)

Enquiries on the subject with the Post Office archives at Mount Pleasant confirmed that the reintroduced Parcel Coaches did include armament for the guard, usually a revolver, but that there is no record of when the practice ceased. Was it realised to be an anachronism at some point, or just abandoned when motorisation largely did away with the need for a second crew member?

The apparent right of Royal Mail employees to bear arms on the Queen's Highway is a matter for conjecture. Had it been seen as an indispensable, it does rather conjure the prosaic vision of, a few years past, a postman walking up your path with a holster on his hip whilst the local bobby was tackling violent criminals with no more than a wooden truncheon!

*Dave Bubier*

### **A point of detail**

Apparently not a term in use in today's world of logistics, 'detail distribution' made an interesting appearance in the February 2012 issue of 'Classic and Vintage Commercials' (page 23). Discussion centred on the extensive sign-writing on a Commer QX box-van of Bridges Transport of Preston, which included "BULK STORAGE AND DETAIL DISTRIBUTION". Initially interpreted as a mistake for 'retail' distribution, the explanation appears to be that it denoted an early form of the hub distribution system.

*Richard Storey*



## AEC & LEYLAND MERGER PLANS of 1926-33 - **Tony Newman**

When the Editorial Team preparing the 'Passenger Companion' came to review the draft entries for AEC and Leyland, they decided not to include a reference to the plans that began in 1926 for a merger between these two companies. Instead, the Team recommended that an article on the subject should be offered to the Journal Editor.

### **The story up to 1929**

The threads of this story up to 1929 need first to be set out as simply as possible. In 1905, the Vanguard Motor Omnibus Co. Ltd had established the Motor Omnibus Construction Co. Ltd for the production of motor omnibuses at premises in Walthamstow. Vanguard was acquired by LGOC in 1908, who continued to develop the bus building business. In 1912, when LGOC became part of the Underground Group, it was decided to separate the bus production by forming a separate company. This was when AEC came into existence as a subsidiary of the Underground Group.

The establishment of AEC was to provide all the buses needed by LGOC and in addition a 5-year agreement was made with Daimler Co Ltd appointing them the agent for all AEC sales outside the Underground Group. The outbreak of war in 1914 completely altered the prospect for these plans. It was not long before the production of chassis at Walthamstow was diverted to meet the needs of the War Office and because of Daimler's links with Germany the agency agreement could not be sustained. At the same period many LGOC buses were drafted to serve with the soldiers in France.

In the post-war years, despite shortages of both materials and skilled labour, AEC had succeeded in producing new types of buses which were designed for use by LGOC. The K-type and the S-type had been built to the limits of what was legally acceptable and AEC had established an experimental branch to develop the best possible successors to the B-type, leaving all elements of horse-bus design behind them. By 1920 the AEC Factory was assembling the S-type on the moving line system. Although everything was looking very

promising for the company, somehow things were not going as smoothly as planned.

Part of the problem was that AEC had not been seen by the majority of operators as an option. Perhaps it was thought of as a London speciality, and the fact that any AECs that were purchased carried a condition of sale that they would not be operated within a 30-mile radius of central London, added to this impression. By the mid-1920s AEC had lost its head-start over competitors and it became difficult to achieve a balance between meeting its obligations to LGOC and selling the surplus to other operators. The attempt by Lord Ashfield in 1926 to rekindle links with Daimler led to the formation of Associated Daimler Co Ltd in order to market ADC vehicles, but this was short-lived and lasted only two years. The idea had been a good one, set against the low demand for AEC chassis by LGOC at this period but was let down by the unreliability of this particular Daimler engine. Competitors Leyland, Guy Motors and also Tilling Stevens were each keeping a close eye on the situation and secret negotiations began to take place to discover whether AEC might be bought out.

### **Negotiations between 1929 and 1933**

The principal personalities in what followed from 1929 to 1933 were:

**Lord Ashfield**, the dynamic and shrewd businessman, who was Chairman and Managing Director of the Underground Group of companies 1919-33.

**Herbert Morrison**, Minister of Transport 1929-31.

**Sir Cyril Hurcomb**, Permanent Under-Secretary, Ministry of Transport 1927-37. **Sir William McLintock**, a leading accountant whose advice was sought by LGOC.

**Mr R Hill**, a very perceptive member of the Ministry of Transport staff.

**George John Rackham**, Chief Engineer at Leyland 1926-8 and at AEC 1928-50.

**Henry Spurrier (II)**, head of Leyland Motors since 1919.

**Charles Reeve**, Managing Director of AEC from 1929.

>>>>>

A file, MT 46/35 'Provisions Relating to AEC in LPTB Bill Clause 6', at The National Archives (TNA) contains a letter dated 27<sup>th</sup> December 1929 from Lord Ashfield to Sir Cyril Hurcomb which notes that competition from Leyland had been strong and that negotiations had been taking place for a merger between AEC and Leyland since 1926. He goes on to say that if such a merger were achieved LGOC would agree to take 90% of its omnibus requirements from the new company for the next 5 years, while the merger would be a strong defence against American competition. Most interestingly the file contains a flurry of correspondence and notes of meetings early in 1930 and marked 'Secret', from which it is clear that a firm offer was made by Leyland to take over AEC. Leyland would acquire 100% of AEC from the Underground Group in exchange for Leyland shares. While Ashfield was in favour of this deal because it fully protected the interests of LGOC, Morrison felt that the time was not right and that it would be inconvenient to bind "the proposed new authority" [which became the LPTB] to one supplier for the bulk of its bus chassis requirements. The parties went away to consider the matter but after two months a letter from Spurrier to Ashfield stated that on 13<sup>th</sup> March 1930 the Leyland directors had met and decided no useful purpose could be served by continuing the negotiations.

This file, together with the recent publication of Brian Thackray's book *The AEC Story from the Regent to the Monarch* (see p17) has prompted the present article in the hope that others may be able to provide further information from other sources.

Brian Thackray has found that while the Leyland Motors board minutes record much of the details from 1929, the AEC board minutes contain nothing on the subject. When the file was put together, possibly by Mr. Hill, some notes dated 25<sup>th</sup> February 1931 were added which outline the sequence of agreements between LGOC and AEC as follows:

- 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec 1912 AEC to provide LGOC with omnibus chassis for 10 years
- 24<sup>th</sup> Jun 1914 AEC to provide LGOC with omnibus chassis for 100 years
- 4<sup>th</sup> Jul 1929 These agreements were cancelled

According to Ashfield, a new agreement for 5 years was made 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1930 but no trace of it can be found, although a new agreement dated 15 Feb 1930 has been seen which re-instated agreements of 1912 & 1914.

Discussions took place towards a new agreement for 10 years from 1 Jan 1931, but it was decided to defer a formal agreement until after LPTB had been established.

### **AEC chassis supply**

Precise figures of AEC chassis delivered to LGOC from 1919-30 are difficult to determine, not least because of chassis allocated by LGOC to associates and subsidiaries. However, in broad terms there were just over 1,000 for the K-type between 1919-26, just under 1,000 for the S-type between 1921-7 and around 2,300 for the NS-type between 1923-8. These deliveries were not evenly spaced over the ten years and although the total for the three types noted above was around 4,300, the bulk of deliveries took place between 1919 and 1925. The TNA File 46/35 contains its own set of figures for annual deliveries 1926-30 which are not qualified by types of bus, but are as follows: 1926 – 9 chassis, 1927 – 75 chassis, 1928 – 125 chassis, 1929 – 96 chassis and 1930 - 1075 chassis. These appear to understate the position but serve to emphasise the low level of LGOC requirements after the bulk of the NS-type was completed and before the call for the next generation of T, LT and ST-types began in 1929.

### **The end of the story**

A letter from Ashfield to Morrison dated 12<sup>th</sup> May 1931 refers to attempts to sell AEC to Ford, but these made little progress. It was not until later that year that another round of negotiations with Leyland was begun. By this time AEC was in a stronger position, having increased its share capital, benefited from the recruitment of Leyland's Chief Engineer, G J Rackham, and was fully engaged in production for LGOC. The discussions rumbled on through 1932 and it was not until the formation of LPTB was an imminent reality in 1933 that the two parties set out five means of settling the matter.

*(concluded lower left column p17)*

# IN THE SHADOW OF CLAYTON-LE-MOORS

**Roger Atkinson**

Wartime tickets can be interesting, but it is not always easy to unearth the story behind them. This *Ribble Motor Services Ltd* 12-Journey ticket is an example.



It was issued for the week ending 9<sup>th</sup> Sept 1944, and below the value, 4/6, it has the initials B.A.C. It was for travel between Rosegrove Stn. and Rishton P.A. It was available all seven days of the week, and under each day there were cancellation spaces distinguishing 9A, 12N, 3, 6, 9 and 12. Enough features to show that this is not an entirely run-of-the-mill ticket. Shown below are both sides of an Accrington Corporation ticket, to which reference is made on page 14.

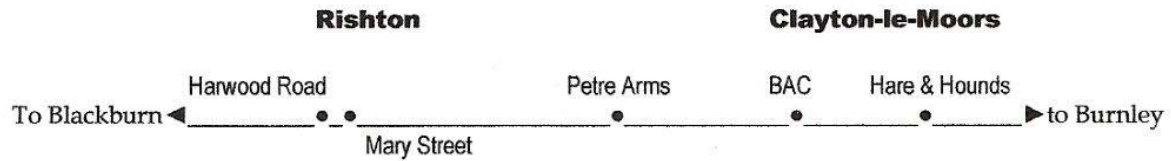
Perhaps the first thing to direct attention to is that, although it could only be used for 12 journeys, those journeys could be taken on any day of the week, Sunday to Saturday. Then there was provision, on each day, for punching the time-band in which the outward and inward journeys were taken. If one takes each time-band as being three

hours terminating at the time printed in the punch space, the ticket covers bus journeys on any day from 6.00 am to midnight. What does one deduce from that? A factory that worked round the clock, seven days a week during the war, was unlikely to be, shall we say, a soap manufactory or a calico printer; rather more likely to be an armaments factory.

Taking the identification of Rishton P.A. as the first point to resolve, this did not prove too difficult, (though it did turn out to be rather a red herring). I do not have any pre-war or wartime Ribble timetables, but the November 1929 edition of the *Roadways Motor Bus Timetables for England & Wales* quickly gave me the timing points on what (in 1929) had been Ribble's Blackburn - Rishton - Clayton-le-Moors service, travelling in a west to east direction, namely: Blackburn Station, Whitebirk (Red Lion), Rishton (Harwood Road), Rishton (Petre Arms), Clayton-le-Moors (Hare & Hounds). The ticket that we are considering, from Rosegrove to Rishton, involved a journey in the opposite direction, east to west, i.e. Burnley - Padiham - Clayton-le-Moors - Rishton; but Rishton P.A. had been solved. Petre Arms was a pub right at the eastern extremity of Rishton, next door to the Rishton Paper Mill, and opposite the Dunkenhalgh Estate entrance. The Dunkenhalgh Estate was the home of the Petre family, the local Lords of the Manor.

So, we know (or, in theory we do) where the ticket was to, It leaves us looking for a factory in Rishton. The next problem was to identify B.A.C., and track down the B.A.C. works. First guess was Blackburn Aircraft Co, but it turned out that this was named after an aeroplane pioneer, Robert Blackburn, not after the town, and that Blackburn Aircraft's base had been in Brough, in the East Riding of Yorkshire - an establishment which indeed did have some tickets for its workers, although those known are all from many years later, after it had evolved through Hawker Siddeley Aircraft into British Aerospace Plc, But we must not be further diverted down that side-track.

The internet, coupled with a visit to the Lancashire Record Office in Preston, quickly provided the



apparent answer, though this turned out to be the red herring. Barrett's Directories of Blackburn & District, 1942 and 1947 editions, listed a smallish factory of the Bristol Aircraft Co Ltd in Mary Street, Rishton. Before the war, the premises had been a cotton mill owned by Albert Mill (Rishton) Ltd. Then came the hitch. A large scale map of Rishton, which the Record Office swiftly produced, showed Mary Street to be at the western end of Rishton, with a mill at the southern extremity. No-one going to Mary Street would get off the bus at Petre Arms; they would ride on to Harwood Road. Had I really found the right factory? I hadn't....

The main factory turned out to be at Clayton-le-Moors, not Rishton. Petre Arms was one stop beyond the factory, and correctly the fare stage for setting the fare (from the Burnley direction). The factory, on the extreme western side of Clayton-le-Moors, was a 'shadow' factory to the Bristol Aeroplane Company works at Filton, Bristol. (Note that 'Aeroplane' not 'Aircraft', was strictly the company's name, though it was often referred to as Bristol Aircraft). 'Shadow' was a very important part of its definition. The factory was set up to manufacture the same products as Filton, both as additional output, and to maintain vital production should Filton be bombed or otherwise put out of action. Manufacture of Hercules engines, used in Lancaster and Halifax bombers and in the Bristol Beaufighter, took place at both Filton and at Clayton-le-Moors.

The theme, referred to in some recent *Journals*, of tickets as wonderful repositories of social history comes to prominence again – and in this instance extends to national history as well. Before we even come to the journey it covered or the bus operations involved, the creation of this factory is worth considering. Newly built, swiftly equipped with machinery and involving the mustering of a huge workforce.

When Winston Churchill became Prime Minister in May 1940, an Emergency Powers Act was quickly passed by parliament, giving virtually dictatorial powers to the Minister of Labour, a post to which Ernest Bevin was appointed. Lord Beaverbrook joined the War Cabinet and was made head of the newly created Ministry of Aircraft Production.

By that time the war had become 'real'; the phoney war was over. German paratroops had overrun Norway with ease. And then Hitler turned to the invasion of Holland and Belgium, which surrendered on 28<sup>th</sup> May. The evacuation of the remnants of the British army from Dunkirk was only a week later. The fear of invasion, the panic removal of signposts, and our reliance on the RAF, the Royal Navy and even the Home Guard as our remaining lines of defence, were realities in June and July.

But for the planning of this factory at Clayton-le-Moors, we do need to go back to the late 1930s. At high government levels there had been, albeit very reluctantly, recognition that Hitler was rearming Germany and that he had ambitions for Germany to dominate Europe. Rearmament did not chime with the popular mood in Britain, only twenty years after the end of the Great War. In mid-August 1939, I was on holiday at Butlin's Camp in Skegness, with my parents. An astrologer, from I think the *Daily Express*, addressed a large audience one evening, and concluded to an utter roar of cheering approval, with the prediction, "There will be no war!" That will have been sixteen or seventeen days before Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 1939.

Of course there had been preparations for war, however much people had hoped that they were unnecessary. We had learned about Air Raid Precautions, and been told that Identity Cards would be introduced if war came. We had even been issued with gas masks, and had put small stocks of tinned corned beef in our cellars, or wherever we planned to shelter. Over a million

children were immediately evacuated from London and from other large towns, in September. Trains had been marshalled to carry them. Billeting officers, with powers of compulsion, had descended on the receiving villages, and allocated labelled, but disorientated, unknown children to unknown, and sometimes unwilling, householders. London Transport Green Line buses were requisitioned as ambulances. All this had been planned in advance; but then it was followed by months and months of the phoney war.

The planning of the BAC factory at Clayton-le-Moors must have been very quietly progressed by at least a month or two before the war.. War records can be described as minimal or silent, but there are two or three clues to consider. Firstly, Accrington Corporation Electricity Committee Minutes for 9<sup>th</sup> October 1939, recorded the Borough Electrical Engineer reporting that, in connection with the proposal to erect a factory in the neighbourhood, steps would require to be taken to provide the necessary supplies of electric current in the event of the scheme being proceeded with. Resolved that the matter be left in the hands the Chairman and Vice-Chairman and appropriate officials; and that:

*'the Engineer be authorised [to provide] an initial supply ..... on the site finally selected'*

At a Special Electricity Sub-Committee meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1940, the Borough Electrical Engineer reported further negotiations for the supply of electricity to a site at Clayton-le-Moors and submitted the approval of the Government Department and the Central Electricity Board to the terms. The Town Clerk was authorised to complete the necessary arrangements.

Meanwhile, Rishton Urban District Council had also been involved – and the Council's Minutes were not quite so 'hush hush' as Accrington's had so far been. The UDC's General Purposes Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> March 1940 reported correspondence from the Town Clerk of Accrington which enclosed a copy of a letter [Accrington had] sent to the Director of Factories of the Air Ministry, the Regional Officer of the Ministry of Health and the Bristol Aeroplane Company concerning housing accommodation for employees at the Clayton-le-Moors factory. This was followed on 11<sup>th</sup> April 1940

by a Resolution by Rishton UDC that an advertisement be inserted in the local '*Advertiser*' requesting persons who are willing to accommodate lodgers, in connection with the new factory at Clayton-le-Moors, to register at the Council Offices.

Finally, on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1940, the Accrington Minutes, quite openly now, recorded an agreement by the Air Ministry to additional charges for electricity due to the 'increment of load' that was being imposed on the Corporation undertaking by the aircraft factory at Clayton-le-Moors. One may infer that a pretty big, modern factory had been set up and was actually in operation in, at most, eight months from selection of the site.

Turning to the social history aspects, '*The Times*' of 27<sup>th</sup> November 1941, had a report of a visit to 'a large new factory in the north of England devoted to the production of Hercules engines. In the conveniently grouped workshops one could see line after line of shining new machines of all sizes and shapes. Amid the hum of machinery, men and women work together side by side'.

In the earlier years of the war, women were encouraged to volunteer for war work, but in December 1941, conscription was introduced for single women aged 20-30. This was soon extended to a wider age range and to include married women. Under the call-up, they could be 'directed to munitions', (a general term for practically any factory work on war production), and a great many women were so directed – including, no doubt, some of those who worked, at least from 1942 onwards, at BAC Clayton-le-Moors.

On the hours of work, another report in '*The Times*' in that same month, November 1941,<sup>1</sup> reported the recommendation of a government committee that hours of work for best output had been found to be not exceeding 60 hours per week for men and 55 for women. Many factories were still operating only two day-shifts or a day shift plus night shift. However, in an increasing number, the plant was being worked round the clock. It was generally agreed that Sunday work should be restricted to essential maintenance or repair work and special occasions to meet exceptional emergencies.

I remember my second cousin, Irene, approaching the age of 18 in summer 1943, deciding firmly to volunteer for the ATS (the Auxiliary Territorial Service, i.e. the army), rather than risk the lottery of being compulsorily called-up a few weeks later, and then directed to munitions. On leave, she looked splendid, wearing her smart khaki uniform with pride. She never regretted foregoing the opportunity to wear overalls, and work 10-hour night shifts packing cordite into shell cases, albeit for a higher weekly wage.

Turning, at last, to the bus services, the scale of these takes some degree of comprehension. Estimates that I have seen of the number of workers at BAC Clayton-le-Moors have varied wildly, from 5,000 to 10,000 or even 11,000. The lower figure is certainly credible. Divided between three shifts a day, and even allowing for one third walking to work, 5,000 or 6,000 overall would still have meant 1,000 or more coming on or off work, each shift, needing a bus. This represented a huge operation for Accrington Corporation and Ribble (and possibly some other contractors as well). The trunk normal east-west regular daily bus service provided by Ribble was Burnley (Cattle Market) – Padiham – Clayton-le-Moors – Rishton – Blackburn – Preston. But the services for the BAC factory must have been specially laid on. Certainly, there was no normal bus service to Clayton from Rosegrove Station or from anywhere in suburban Burnley, except along the route out via Padiham. And a curfew on normal bus services required last buses to leave the town terminus by 9-30 pm. If the factory workers were putting in 60 hour weeks, many of the bus crews will have been doing the same – and in the winter months that meant in several black-out hours, and having to walk home from the depot at the end of the duty.

Clayton-le-Moors Urban District Council records I found to be singularly silent on the BAC works – perhaps I simply did not unearth the right ones. But there was correspondence in 1941 between Accrington Corporation Transport and the Clerk to the Urban District Council asking for a shielded light to be placed on a pole at Fort's Arms, the Clayton-le-Moors terminus for the normal service buses from Accrington, to assist drivers who had to back the buses there in the black-out.<sup>2</sup> There was

very little traffic on the roads, but bus operation was not without one or two other hazards.

As virtually a postscript, I would mention that as soon the war ended – indeed, probably as soon as the war in Europe was over on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945, -- the BAC factory at Clayton-le-Moors ceased production. Its products were no longer needed. By 16<sup>th</sup> November 1945, the General Manager at Accrington Corporation Transport was writing to Clayton-le-Moors UDC asking them to hurry up with the new road that the Council was building for Courtaulds, now the owners of the BAC works, so that their buses could run right to the works. Where and how the buses to the works had turned during the war, I know not.

Finally, I record with great appreciation, the help that I had from John Simpson, the Community History Manager at Accrington Library – for example it would never have occurred to me to look at the Corporation's Electricity Committee Minutes. Yet, therein, lay the best clues unearthed to the date of opening the Bristol Aeroplane Company's factory.

And this reminds me – the Electricity Department was a frequent advertiser on the backs of Accrington Corporation's tram and bus punch tickets, before they went over to TIMs in the mid-1930s (p.161/1980). So, in nodding recognition that, however it has turned out, this was supposed to have been an article on bus tickets, also on page 11 are the front and back of an Accrington Corporation 1½d Discount Ticket, showing '*Accrington Electricity Now Three Units A Penny*'. The Prepaid Discount tickets had progressively had Tramways, then Omnibuses titles. This is the solitary one I have with Transport title. On its front, there is a blue ink signature, 'Armstrong'. G Armstrong was the General Manager from 1944 to 1951. I have a note that I acquired the ticket in March 1950, - presumably simply picked up on a bus. By then it must have been rather old stock, and the advert was sadly out of date. The Corporation's electricity undertaking had been nationalised from 1<sup>st</sup> April 1948, and Accrington's supplier in 1950 will have been the North Western Electricity Board; and electric current may have been a wee bit dearer than three units for a penny! (*footnotes see opposite*)

### In the Shadow of Clayton-Le-Moors

#### Footnotes:

- 1 `The Times` 13<sup>th</sup> November, 1941, p2
- 2 Lancashire Archives reference. UDCL 31/16



## BOOK REVIEWS

### David Geldard - *Great Western Railway Road Motor Tickets*

(Solo Publications, 80 The Street, Kingston, Canterbury CT4 6JQ). ISBN 978-0-9568528-6-1. 94 pp, spiral binding. Profusely colour illustrated. Price £24.00

This is a well written, scrupulously well researched and excellently produced book. The spiral binding may detract from its appearance on a bookshelf, but it has enabled a colour-illustrated, well written, well edited book to have been put on sale at what is, in present day terms, an acceptable price.

The GWR was a pioneer of rural motor buses in this country. It ran them from 1903 to 1933, in many parts of the company's substantial railway network. These were eventually devolved to major bus companies, in which, usually, the GWR had obtained a shareholding.

It is hard to conceive of any facet of the tickets which David Geldard has not addressed: printers, advertising on ticket backs, the routes and their geographical stages, numerical stage tickets, major and minor changes in ticket design or layout with approximate dates (and evidence), conductor numbers on tickets, and tickets for tours and special occasions. The book is divided into rational chapters and interspersed with periodic summaries and overviews, which it is useful to have. Virtually every page has excellent colour reproductions, appropriate to the adjacent text.

The research that has gone into this has taken years; it is not based on one collection, but on many. David Geldard has visited collections, all over the country, noting and photographing their contents. Some wonderful tickets have been found. As well as the one or two illustrated here, one can cite –

virtually at random – a Pupil Season from Summer 1931 between Highworth and Swindon Junction by Road Motor Car Only, or an Edmondson for Plymouth Mill Bay to Yelverton or Burrator by Motor Observation Car. On the back of a bus punch ticket there was an advertisement for the company's conveyance by rail of Farm and Dairy Produce. `Boxes for conveyance of the produce can be purchased at the stations at cheap rates`.

Finally, there is the feature of excellent editorial attention by Ken Elks, of Solo Publications which permeates the whole work; the production standards have matched the worth of the material.

This is a specialist book. It is certainly one to note as a major source of reference; but give thought (this Christmas perhaps) to possessing it as a source of inspiration on the social history and aspects of national history that can be derived from researching bus tickets, -- and the pleasure you may derive from studying it. Some examples are illustrated below.



Walter Burt – *Kirkcaldy & Central Fife's Trams and Buses*. (Amberley Publishing, The Hill, Merrywalks, Stroud, Gloucs. GL5 4EP) November 2012. Price £14.99 ISBN 978-1-4456-1140-9. Paperback, 96pp.

This is essentially a pictorial account, introduced by a brief text. A wide range of illustrations (including tinted postcards of the period) shows the Corporation tramway era, and also the linked Wemyss & District's tramway to Leven. Walter Alexander buses replaced the tramways, also serving a wider area. Early views of buses are mainly in black and white, but many of the later ones in colour, featuring both the blue used up to 1962, and the red livery subsequently adopted for Fife following division of Alexander's fleet in 1962. Following transfer of ownership to Stagecoach on

privatisation in 1992, that operator's standard scheme was adopted, and the story is taken up to the introduction of Enviro 400s in 2010. **PRW**

Patrick Hall - *The Motor Bus in the Isle of Wight before 1919*

(published by the author at 13 Landsdown Gardens, Chillerton, Newport, IoW PO30 3HJ, 2012) 159pp. ISBN 978-0-9572316-0-3 (Paperback). Available direct from the author, at £18.75 (inc p&p): make cheques payable to 'P.Hall'.

In most parts of Britain, bus operations prior to the First World War were relatively limited, and mainly associated with some of the larger centres. More extensive services, especially in rural areas, did not develop on a large scale until the 1920s. This very well-produced book indicates the significant operations that occurred in the Isle of Wight in this early period, albeit not sustained in most cases. The Island possessed a relatively extensive rail network for its size, but nonetheless opportunities were available for early bus pioneers both competing with, and complementary to, the rail network.

The most notable operator described in the book is Isle of Wight Express Motor Syndicate Ltd., operating between 1904 and 1908, albeit with many changes in services provided, management structure and fleet composition. For the scale of operation, documentation is remarkably thorough, in part one presumes due to the formal company structure. Illustrations are also very extensive, notably of the Milnes-Daimler double-deckers that were run: presumably their novelty at that time would have created greater interest among local photographers than subsequent bus operations. The business eventually ceased to operate in November 1908. Other operators in the area are also documented, notably Creeth and Sons, serving Seaview, a resort located east of Ryde, using steam buses, from 1909 to 1919 (and then subsequently running petrol-engined buses until 1930, which the author promises to describe in a future volume). The final operation described in is that of Ventnor Road Cars Ltd, serving the hilly southern tip of the island, in 1913-14. One of the most interesting findings from the author's research is the role of A.D.Mackenzie, later to become much more widely

known in connection with Southdown Motor Services, in the latter part of the Express business story, as general manager from March 1907.

The book is very well illustrated, not only with numerous b&w views of the period, but also some colour-tinted postcard reproductions, tickets, and maps. Supporting appendices document routes and vehicles operated. One looks forward to the next instalment of the island's bus story.

Laurie James - *Woking Buses 1911-1939*.

(Amberley Publishing, The Hill, Merrywalks, Stroud, Gloucs. GL5 4EP) August 2012. Price £15.99 ISBN 978-1-4456-0829-7. Paperback, 160pp.

This very well-presented book provides an exceptionally comprehensive history of local operations in the Woking area up to 1939, a date which coincided with the end of locally-based independent operation, and domination of two large group operators (Aldershot & District to the west, London Transport Country Services to the east). In contrast to other towns of similar size, Woking did not exist as a traditional market town, but was to a very large extent a creation, of the railway, as a commuter settlement. Hence, buses both served and created new patterns of movement. The role of large military camps in the area is also evident as a source of demand. As the book's title indicates, operations appeared before the First World War (and indeed, during it), but as in other areas, rapid growth took place mainly in the 1920s.

A general history of services in the area is given, notably showing how the local authorities in the area concerned exercised their licensing powers prior to the 1930 Road Traffic Act and role played by the area Traffic Commissioners from the following year (their records also greatly expand the degree of detail that can be provided on this early period). In addition each operator receives a separate chapter (apart from some of the smaller independents, which are combined). Very extensive illustrations are provided, often showing the small single deckers typical of independents of that time, and slightly larger vehicles of the bigger operators. A particularly useful feature is the inclusion of network maps for each operator (or for groups of



operators) at relevant points in the text. Each chapter is headed not only with the name(s) of the operator(s) concerned, but with a sub-heading commenting on their role, thus 'W.Eggleton and Son: The Last Independent on the Chobham and Addlestone Routes', or 'S Tanner: Rural Services North from Woking'. A somewhat less distinguished indication is given for 'J.F. Hampton: An Unremarkable Bus Operator', while one must feel somewhat sorry for 'S.Spooner: An Unlucky Man' (a sub-heading subsequently justified by the following narrative text). A comprehensive listing of vehicles owned by the local operators is provided as an appendix.

PRW

### Brian Thackray - *The AEC Story from the Regent to the Monarch*

(Stroud: Amberley Publishing, - address above - 2012). ISBN 978 1 4456 0390 2. Paperback, £25.00

This is the third book about AEC by the same author, but the publisher has changed. The two previous titles were *AEC Story Part 1* which appeared in 2001, and *AEC Vehicles – Origins to 1929*, which followed in 2004. The present work effectively forms a part 2 to the first title.

The author writes with personal experience of the company's products, being born into a family in the haulage business which operated AECs. He joined AEC as an apprentice in 1947 and then worked in the company's Service Department at Southall. Subsequently, he joined the family business, but his enthusiasm for the AEC has never left him. The book is comprehensive to the point of overwhelming the reader with information, and stands as a work of reference for road transport historians and engineers alike. It is therefore a pity that an index is not included, by which readers might find their way back to a point that has particular relevance for them.

The period from 1929 to 1935 is described in detail, starting with an overview of the Company's principal mechanical units. Several of the chapters follow a pattern of describing the specification, production schedules, road tests and reliability for each type. This period saw the transfer of production from Walthamstow to Southall. We are

taken through the production batches of the of the Regent, Regal, Renown, Q-type and Trolleybus chassis for passenger work, and the Mercury, Majestic, Mammoth, Mandator, Marshal and Monarch chassis for freight, not forgetting the Ranger for both types of work. Specialised four and six wheel drive vehicles for rough terrain are included, with details of tests at the Mechanical Warfare Experimental Establishment, Farnborough. Outside the scope of road transport history, but closely connected from an engineering viewpoint, are details of the railcars for the Great Western Railway. Two chapters are devoted to technical descriptions of the range of oil engines from the A155 to the A186, covering the period when use of petrol engines began to decline in favour of oil engines for commercial vehicles.

The achievements of G.J.Rackham and H.R.Ricardo are interspersed where appropriate to give credit to their respective contributions towards perfecting the AEC products.

The book concludes with a particularly interesting record of the little-known negotiations towards a merger of AEC and Leyland, which came to naught and which are reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

The work is attractively presented and your reviewer found only one understandable typographical error – "Crossville" instead of "Crosville" in two places. There are 255 pages, over 90 black and white photographs of vehicles, 30 technical illustrations and 28 drawings. AGN

#### AEC & LEYLAND MERGER PLANS

*(concluded from Page 10)*

These five options were reduced to two – either the forming of a merger holding-company, favoured by Ashfield, or AEC becoming a subsidiary of Leyland by the latter's purchase of AEC shares. As described in detail in Brian Thackray's book, despite these efforts and several more attempts to reach agreement, matters came to an abrupt end in mid-October 1933 and the two companies went their separate ways until the end of 1946, when Leyland joined with AEC to form the trolleybus manufacturer British United Traction Ltd.

## THE SOUTH WALES SOLUTION

### John Howie

By 1943 the Ministry of War Transport was becoming increasingly concerned that all buses should be used as efficiently as possible. The following, extracted from a file in The National Archive (*Source: MT55/257*), gives a detailed description of this process being applied to bus operations in parts of South Wales.

In August a report from the local Regional Traffic Commissioner (RTC) suggested that this was not the case in three areas of South Wales:

#### Maesteg – Caerau

This 2.5 mile route with a 15-20 minute frequency was worked by five separate operators, using buses with the following seating capacities, days of operation and headways:

	<b>Mon–Th</b> (20 min)	<b>Fri/Sat</b> (15 min)	<b>Sun</b> (20 min)
Seats			
30	3	7	3
20	3	3	3
14	1	1	1

However, due to the complexity of the schedule some vehicles were only used two days per week with the result that capacity offered differed from day to day. The Ministry told operators to make the service more economic and fix the daily number of seats. After some negotiation Mrs Brewer acquired the services of the other four and provided a service exclusively with 30-seat (or above) vehicles – four on Mon-Thurs, six on Fri/Sat and three on Sunday.

#### Local Barry Services

These comprised a seven-mile network provided by five one-vehicle operators, plus three Western Welsh, giving a combined five-minute frequency. There was no incentive to improve efficiency as each of the five owners was content to maintain the status quo.

The RTC considered a combined service would reduce the number of buses to four. Accordingly, the private operators were informed by the Manpower Board that better use of labour was required and there would be no objection to any operator or driver 'being called up'! The file lists all the individuals and their vehicles as a first step to action, but the authorities were not prepared to go any further '*in case they set a precedent*':

**J Williams** (age 45) 2 x 30 seat (one out of use); 50 miles/day-stage and workers services; one driver (age 46) – 6.5 hrs/day

**A Williams** (age 36) 1 x 32 seat, 50 miles/day-stage & workers; one driver (age 39) – 6.5 hrs/day

**A Morgan** (age 57) 1 x 32 seat; 50 miles-stage; one driver (age 32), 6.5hrs/day

**R Guppy** (age 40) 1 x 30 seat; 50 miles-stage, one driver (age 32) - 6.5hrs/day

**A Walters** (deceased) 1 x 32 seat; 50 miles-stage, 1 driver (age 38) – 6.5 hrs/day - service operated on temporary licence by executors

#### Aberavon – Ponthydfen

This was another 2.5 mile route, but with 10 operators and 12 vehicles providing a frequency of 20 mins (Mon-Fri), 10 mins (Sat) and 30 mins (Sun).

Full operator details were:

(Mrs) **E A Jenkins** (age 39) psv driver, no employees

**David Jones & Son** (age 49) psv driver, 9 x s/d vehicles (of which two on stage and seven on workmen's services), 10 drivers (ages given)

**William Jones** (age 61) no psv licence, 1 x s/d, one driver (age 39); no other services

**Joseph Mason & Son** (age 43) psv, 1 x s/d; only service

(Mrs) **E A Stephens** (age 41) psv licence, 1 x s/d; only service

**Thomas Bros Ltd** – I D Evans (age 43) –Secretary. No psv, 10 x s/d (two on stage), nine drivers. Also operates other stage and workmen's services

**Theophilus Thomas** (age 59) psv licence, 1 x s/d, only service

**John Williams** (age 51) psv licence, 1 x s/d, only service

**Rhyd Lewis** (age 49) psv licence, 1 x s/d, only service

**W J Clement** (age 46) psv licence, 1 x s/d, only service

After prolonged negotiation operators were reduced to **three** by means of takeovers:

**Thomas Bros** acquired W J Clement, Theo Thomas, J Williams & Mrs EA Stephens

**D Jones & Son** acquired Mrs E A Jenkins

**Rhyd Lewis & W Jones** created a partnership and acquired J Mason & Son

The vehicle requirement was reduced to:

Four (Mon – Fri)

Three (Sat)

Two (Sun).

(end)

## COVENTRY CONFERENCE

13<sup>th</sup> October 2012

A well-attended event heard four lively presentations from guest speakers.

The first speaker was **Glen McBirnie** on the theme of 'Rugby Portland Cement Transport', an appropriate theme given the location of several of that former company's plants in the same region as our meeting. From his experience as a driver, he was able to speak in a direct and entertaining style on the distribution of manufactured products, from the immediate post-war era of bagged cement on flat bodies, to the use of more specialised vehicles to deliver cement in bulk. The reliability and performance of different types of vehicles used in this operation clearly varied greatly.

**Richard Mellor's** talk "As the Crow flew" described the story of the Crow Carrying Company Ltd. of East London. He produced a newspaper-style publication 'The Crow Clarion' made available to all who attended. Copies have also been provided by Richard as an insert in this issue of the Journal, which is largely self-explanatory.

An interesting additional item described by Richard was the costing behind the contract to supply seawater to Sealions at London Zoo (the first news item in the 'Clarion'). This is shown below – note that it is in pre-decimal currency. For standardising the format, shillings and pence are shown to two places, thus £6 2s 6d is shown as 6.02.06, etc.

Seawater to Regent's Park - 400 miles per week

### Capital costs

Cost of unit, incl. painting, signwriting and delivery	£4750
Cost of trailer	£6300

### Annual Costs (in £.s.d)

Unit depreciation over 6 years	783.06.08
Trailer depreciation over 8 years	787.07.06
Total depreciation	1570.14.02
Road Fund Licence	513.00.00
RTA Licence	4.00.00
Insurance –	
vehicle and goods in transit	150.00.00
Administration	750.00.00
Contingencies	50.00.00

Annual standing charge sub-total 3037.15.02

5% spare vehicle 152.00.00

Profit – 20% on capital employed	2210.00.00
Annual standing charge	5399.15.02
Weekly standing charge	103.16.08
Drivers' wages	27.10.00
Drivers' on-costs: pensions, NI, RTITB employers' levy, Employer's liability insurance, holiday & sick pay	4.00.00
Charge per week	135.06.08
Fuel – 7 mpg at 5s 6d per gallon	15.14.02
Lub oil at 4d per mile	0.13.04
Maintenance at 6d per mile	10.00.00
Tyres – 40,000 miles £43 each = 3.675d per mile	6.02.06
Contingencies (10%)	3.04.07
Sub-total of running costs	35.14.03
Total cost per week	170.17.09

**Ian Souter**, an independent consultant active in the tramway/light rail field, provided a lively talk under the title 'The British Tram: Basket-case or Barometer?', an intriguing title for a road transport-based audience. He showed that some aspects of tramway operation were primarily influenced by external economic and social factors at the time, while, others were more directly affected by the performance of the industry itself. For example, the obligation arising from the 1870 Tramways Act to construct and maintain part of the road structure within the proximity of the rails imposed an additional burden on tramway operators. While many small systems inevitably succumbed to bus replacement, some larger operators might have had greater chance of success following selective modernisation in the post-war period (such as Aberdeen, or Liverpool) until abandonment became the general policy. Interesting comparisons in patronage trends between Britain and other European countries were also provided. It is hoped to produce a fuller account of Ian's work in a future issue.

The meeting concluded with **Stephen Barber**, formerly responsible for managing the Wallace Arnold coach operations and now with the CPT, on 'Holidays by Coach – a look at 100 years of UK coach touring'. Substantial operations developed at an early stage, resuming after World War Two and reaching a greater extent in the 1960s. In an interesting presentation, he highlighted the very rigid licensing system which applied prior to 1980, notably in regulation of prices, and granting of exclusive licences to operators for specific destinations.

PRW

## Visiting Brooklands

(See Chair's report on page 8)

(right) Our chairman with the Rev Simon Douglas, and his preserved RT in green country bus livery

(below) Our chairman on board an example of the 'New Bus for London' (aka 'Borismaster'), with one of the regular drivers on the 38, who spoke in very enthusiastic terms about the vehicle.



**Best Wishes to readers for Christmas and the New Year**

Printed by Counter Print, Stafford