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JOURNAL

No 71

February 2013

www.rrtha.org.uk

DISCOVERING THE MEN BEHIND THE WHEEL

Paul Lacey

A review of Paul Lacey's history of operators in the Newbury area appeared in issue 69 of this Journal. This article looks in more detail at some of the research methods used in this work, which will also be of relevance to those investigating other areas and operators.

For many years I have researched the origins of the bus and coach operators in the vast rural hinterland surrounding the west Berkshire market town of Newbury. Between roughly 1900 and 1950 there were over 100 small outfits providing bus services or charabanc (later coaching) services, and all of them have a story that goes deeper than just what they achieved in the public domain.

In the era I first started such research, transport books tended to be written with the assumption of some prior knowledge on the part of the reader regarding vehicle developments and general history of that industry, whilst the backgrounds of the protagonists were rarely explored. I'm pleased to be amongst those transport historians who have changed that viewpoint, bringing such histories into their rightful context as both local and social history.

When I decided to write a new book on the Newbury area operators, which replaced two earlier volumes from 1985/7 (and both long out of print), my experience with genealogy already stood me in good stead for fleshing out the story of the individuals. However, as with all research, there were to be many interesting discoveries, both from the old records and those it put me in touch with!

The resources for researching the activities of those whose businesses commenced before or after the Great War have of course much improved in recent years, as the following examples will clearly demonstrate. By working these in with other research from local trade directories and newspaper advertising, a remarkably complete picture started to emerge of some individuals who had previously been something of a mystery. As a spin-off, I also found myself supplying information previously unknown to relatives in a number of cases!

Denham Bros.

Brothers Theo and Ambrose ('Boss') Denham became the main bus operators providing services radiating from Newbury, and I already had the pleasure of interviewing old Boss in the early 1980's, so I knew a bit about them, including the fact that the family had moved whenever their father (who was an engine-driver for the Great Western Railway) was posted to other locations.

For the new book I contacted Boss's son Lionel, and he and his wife Trixie welcomed me like an old friend. When I visited them they had been sorting through a trunk of his father's old papers, revealing some interesting early employment history. The family story that he was driving taxis at age 15 in Birmingham was given substance by his hackney carriage driver's license dated 28th November 1913, a month before his 16th birthday - so he evidently added a few years on! Due to his volunteering to drive for the French Red Cross after war broke out, there was even a testimonial letter from his current employer, which also added his home address. I had of course already researched the family movements through the 1891 and 1901 census, which gave the Denhams some additional information they didn't know.

It was disappointing to not find his WW1 record, as he entered the regular forces in 1916, but further items from the trunk made up for that, with further employment correspondence, include his appointment as chauffeur-mechanic to the Countess of Aylesford of Packington Hall in Meriden in 1919. After a few years he left to work at the Humber Motor Works in Coventry before joining his brother's expanding garage and bus business in Newbury.

Prothero's Bus Service

The origins of this enterprise had long puzzled me, with no sign of the owner John Prothero prior to the start of the service, other than knowing he had previously run a country carrier's bus service with a gentleman named R.V.Revell. The only information on the latter came from his son Ralph, who was a driver (later inspector) on the Newbury & District buses, plus a little more from a grand-daughter still living in Newbury, but none revealed what I was to find out as the search expanded. These issues were quite fundamental to fully covering the story, but I had little idea where to start, and previous attempts to locate relatives had failed.

However, then came along one of those lucky breaks that so often can change the pace of discovery, an old photo in the local newspaper showing one of Prothero's buses and its driver Charlie Bishop. I recalled that I had heard of him, and had some information on his later involvement,



Above: Boss Denham stands in front of 14-seater Talbot bus KE3196 wearing his best driving trousers.

but also knew he was no longer around. If you do this kind of research it is important to follow up any such leads, so off went a letter to the person submitting the photo, who actually couldn't help me directly, but he did tell me where Charlie's daughter Dot Hibberd was. I wrote to her, and she was pleased to hear from me, adding that she knew she had a draft letter written to me by her father on his deathbed in the late 1980s!

We met up in the Empire Café in Cheap Street, Newbury, where the owner Wendy knows many of the older Newburians, and when Dot arrived she was pleased I was taking an interest. Not only did she have the draft letter, which told me things only an eyewitness could possibly have done, but also produced her father's fuller account of his life right through from boyhood assisting his father, who was a shepherd. This I borrowed and thoroughly enjoyed all aspects of, being a bygone age but no so long ago.

Dot also recalled that John Prothero's wife Flora was somehow connected to Mr. Revell, which set in

train a remarkably set of discoveries. With my Ancestry membership I set about identifying the origins of both, using a combination of BMD and census searches, revealing that John Prothero had originated in Gloucestershire, leaving his rural farming existence for the emerging world of motor cars with the Hereford Motor Company. The latter appointment was actually revealed by papers attached to his WW1 records on Ancestry, which also include several other letters of recommendation. With his driving and mechanic skills he was an obvious candidate for the Army Service Corps (Mechanical Transport), a theme I soon found was prevalent in those later involved in setting up transport enterprises post-war. However, the other key discovery was that his wife Flora was in fact the sister of Robert Valentine Revell, hence the later business partnership!



Above: Rather more elegantly dressed in cloche hat and white stockings is Flora Prothero and the Ford bus RX4272 her husband bought for her to drive.

With the war over John was finding it difficult to find employment, but his brother-in-law (who had spent the war in the Army Veterinary Corps) had landed a position looking after polo ponies up on the Berkshire Downs at West Ilsley. John joined him nearby at Beedon and the pair bought a Ford Model T as a carrier's bus. Although they duly fell out after about a year, Revell continued as carrier and John expanded into a motor garage business and bus operation. By now I had quite a lot more on these activities, but photos remained in short supply, so I trawled the connections on Ancestry, on another lead from Dot that Prothero had a son that used to travel with her father on the bus. And there was indeed someone interested in John,

stating all the correct dates and locations, so off went an email.

A few days later I received a letter from a rather surprised Mr Prothero, who turned out to be the young son Dot had mentioned, who was happy to cooperate. The next letter produced two really excellent photos, one showing John as chauffeur to the Bishop of Llanduff, whilst the other was of Flora. The latter also tied in with Charlie Bishop's memories, as he recalled teaching Flora to drive the Ford bus that John bought for her, something the latter hadn't managed to do! I was also able to let 'young Dick' (who must be in his 80's) have copies of the records I had found along the way, including his father's military service in France and Egypt.

Douglas Wilfred Houghton

This third example shows how the resources available to genealogists can resolve even the barest of stories, as Doug Houghton had been a mystery to me before the advent of the 1901 and 1911 census. The 1901 census had revealed that the family had taken up residence as farmers a short way west of Newbury at Westbrook in the Lambourn Valley, together with the origins of Doug at Sutton Coldfield in 1882. With this information I confidently searched the 1911 census and promptly found nothing. A trawl of marriages did reveal one possibility, though the bride was also given as Houghton, so I was not sure and, although I was certain he had seen war service, the papers had not survived.

The situation didn't look too hopeful, but again I tried the connections on Ancestry, and there was someone interested in him, so off went another email. A reply came back from Dianne Scoles, a relative who is in Canada, who filled me with details even I could never have figured out. It transpired that the family had emigrated to Canada in 1903, but Doug returned in 1905 to marry his cousin Augusta ('Gussie') Houghton, and the couple had daughter Stella in England. However, in 1906 they returned to Canada to try home-steading in Saskatchewan, something they found rather hard, so they returned yet again 1913 – all of this occurring between two censuses!

>>>>>>

The above are just three examples from the scores of personal history trails followed up during my researches, and by the time I had finished virtually everyone's story could be revealed. To me this was immensely satisfying, as part of my brief is to record the histories of such proprietors for posterity, something which I know from past experience will be a resource for those searching out family members in the future.

In conclusion

The methodology used to achieve these histories is exactly the same as for most genealogical research, but several points are worth noting. Always keep notes of source materials and possible leads, even if incomplete. Examine family stories and try to prove or disprove their relevance. Each piece, like a jigsaw puzzle, helps to assemble the full picture. Try all available sources, and never give up!

The Newbury & District Motor Services Story

The results of this highly detailed history was published in March 2011, comprising of 224 A4 pages in laminated covers, illustrated with over 300 black and white photos, route maps, fleet list and index of operators. Published at £25 this is offered to R&RTHA members at £15.50 post and packing. Order from Paul Lacey, 17 Sparrow Close, Wooshill, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG41 3HT.

AN APOLOGY

'Whereas I Richard Woolford, of Cirencester, in the County of Gloucester, have been guilty of a most notorious Insult and Outrage in driving a wagon against the carriage of Thomas Master, Esq; of Cirencester, whereby very fatal consequences had like to have ensured to some of that Gentleman's family; for which he had most justly commenced an action against me; but upon my earnest Solicitation for Pardon and unfeigned Sorrow for my Offence, he has been pleased to stop the Prosecution, upon my making an acknowledgement in The Gloucester Journal, which I most thankfully comply with; as witness my hand this 18th day of January, 1779'

'SCOOTER MANIA'

A brief retrospective note on this intriguing exhibition staged by Coventry Transport Museum (26 October 2012 – 3 March 2013) may be of interest to members. Drawing on the collection assembled by Robin Spalding, it displayed some 40 models from 25 manufacturers. 'British scooters from the 1950s and 1960s' might seem something of an oxymoron, as the motor scooter, however iconic for the era of 'Mods and Rockers', never caught on in the UK as it did on the Continent. Perhaps the most popular machine, the 'Douglas Vespa', exemplifies the industrial reality: UK manufacturing under licence. The Brookhouse 'Corgi', which originated in the folding bike of paratroopers in the war, and the products of Dunkley Motors of Hounslow in the late 1950s, were among the exceptions. The great names of British motorcycle manufacturing, BSA and Triumph, were late on the scene, as Steve Koerner makes clear in *The Strange Death of the British Motorcycle Industry* (2012), especially in chapters 5 and 6.

Two major trends were evident in the display - those from smaller to larger machines, and in the substitution of glass fibre for steel in scooter bodywork - but the twenty years up to the mid-1960s saw bewildering multiplicity of makers (or would-be makers) from the cycle, motor cycle, coachwork, pram and engine industries. They largely operated, obviously or not, under licence, and business plans were vastly over-ambitious. Fortunately, Robin Spalding has provided an attractively illustrated guide to this complex scene in *British Motor Scooters 1946-70* (ISBN 978-0-9573144-0-5).

Richard Storey



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ISSN: 2044-7442

ASSOCIATION BUSINESS

Arrangements for the Wales on Wheels conference, on 17/18 May in Swansea, are well in hand, and are the subject of an accompanying item from John Ashley, our Events Organizer. Suffice it here to note and congratulate our keynote speaker on his most recently announced knighthood. Sir Peter Hendy's address is entitled 'Transport and Politics: the Experience of the Mayor and TfL since 2000'.

A full complement of members attended the November committee meeting, in the Managing Director's room of the Oxford Bus Company, for which we were all very grateful to Philip Kirk. With a prompt start, much immediate 'give and take', and a determination to keep to time, like all good transport specialists, business was completed within the allotted two hours! The next meeting is to take place, again in Oxford, on Friday, 22 February, when it is intended to make further progress on recruitment and marketing of the Association, crystallize plans for events later in the year, give preliminary thought to 2014, and receive reports on our publication initiatives. Philip Kirk, very much as a work of supererogation, has undertaken an analysis of members' specialists fields which should help the Committee in refining its plans. In discussions with John Hibbs, our President, the thought was developed that each principal meeting should possibly have a specific theme. Members' comments on this idea and on the character of the Association and its programme would be especially welcome.

Last year's Autumn's Coventry Annual Dinner and Conference, largely deemed to having been successful, it is proposed to follow the same formula this year: *Annual Dinner at the Ramada Hotel on Friday, 18 October, to which members may be accompanied by guests, with formal presentations at the Transport Museum on Saturday, 19 October.* Peter Reed, the actor and author, who unfortunately had to postpone his engagement last year, has agreed to give a light-hearted address at the Dinner on the theme of Dickens and Transport. **Realising that**

members welcome advance notice, it is hoped that a special note of this date will be made!

Royston Fisher has taken over the role of Treasurer, and has been assiduously briefed by our out-going Treasurer, John Howie, to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for his past stewardship. John Ashley appointed in November as Events and Publicity Officer, Membership Secretary, and Webmaster, has already helped to transform our programme and, as members will realise, has a very full plate. John would particularly welcome items for the website that he is determined to develop comprehensively. One of the essential ingredients is the supply of suitable material. In this connection, the undertaking of each committee member to submit an item, however small, each month, offers great promise. I confess here that I am the guilty party, for which I deeply apologise, who, in haste, because delivery had already been seriously delayed, included out- of- date information about membership charges in *Journal* 69.

Needless to say, the imminent publication of *The Companion to the History of Road Passenger Transport* has been a major recent preoccupation. The project is on track, thanks especially to the work of Martin Higginson and Ken Swallow, and it has been agreed that we should aim for a launch in London in June, 2013. Negotiations were put in hand to establish an appropriate venue, date and time. Accommodation at the Covent Garden London Transport Museum has been inspected and charges obtained. Needless to say, members will be advised when arrangements are confirmed.

The Committee is very appreciative of the fact that the regular cycle of four editions a year has been resumed for the *Journal*, that its quality is being progressively enriched, along with a few 'design tweaks'.

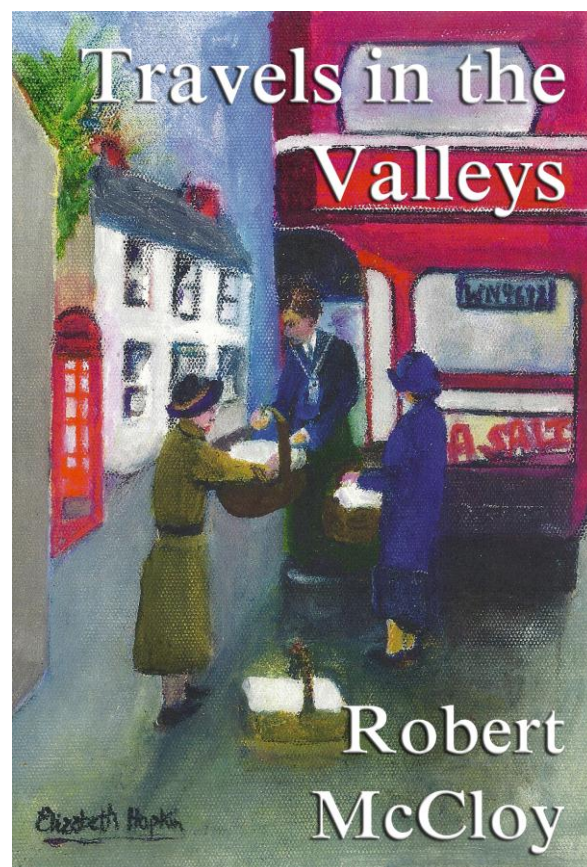
A start has been made to establish more effective links with 'sister' organisations. A notable example is the London Bus Museum which intends to participate in the *Wheels in Wales* event in May. We have also agreed to focus upon those universities specialising in transport studies and with maintaining effective links with ATOC.

Tony Newman, our Research Co-ordinator, has drawn the Committee's attention to recent developments at the British Library's Newspaper Collection at Colindale. This invaluable resource to transport students merits wider publicity.

The Committee has given further careful consideration to the publication of Nigel Furness' study of the Tilling Group. It has agreed that Tony Newman, on behalf of the Association, would collaborate closely with the Author resolving any queries and safeguarding the integrity of the text, whilst John Howie would work up a financial plan, covering printing and distribution, to the end that no financial burden ultimately falls upon the Association.

On these and any other matter of concern your observations would be welcome.

Robert McCloy, 1st February 2013



See a notice for our Chairman's new book on page 16



WALES ON WHEELS 2013

**The R&RTHA Spring Conference
National Waterfront Museum Swansea
Friday 17th May and Saturday 18th May 2013**

*The museum, specialising in industrial history, is the newest member of the National Museum of Wales
(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 Sir Peter Hendy, Transport Commissioner for London, in the afternoon.
- 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 R&RTHA, National Waterfront Museum, National Museum of Wales, Swansea Museum, Swansea University, Welsh Area Fire Engine Restoration Society, the Gilbern Club, London Bus Museum and of course many more! Swansea Bus Museum have offered to ferry our members to the different venues on the Friday, including a visit to their substantial premises. They will also be very active on Saturday,

with several vehicles at the Waterfront Museum. Looking to future history, Swansea Metropolitan University will have a significant presence from their automotive design department.

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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NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM of the R&RTHA will be held at the Bettmann Room, Coventry Transport Museum, Millennium Place, Hales Street, Coventry CV1 1JD on Saturday 16th March 2013 at 1100hrs.

AGENDA

- Apologies for Absence
- Minutes of previous AGM (24th March 2012)
- Report of Directors & Accounts for 2012
- Chairman's Report
- To note that Ken Swallow, retiring by rotation, does not offer himself for re-election
- To propose the re-election of Andrew Waller (who retires by rotation)

Nominations for the vacant Director posts should be sent to the Company Secretary at:-
37, Balcombe Gardens, HORLEY, RH6 9BY
by **2nd March 2013 at the latest**

The meeting will be followed by a guided tour of the Museum, and a presentation by Peter White on the development of bus and coach services in Zimbabwe. This will be based on a consultancy study of rural and long-distance services in 1984, also covering earlier history, roles of British-owned and locally-based operators, regulation, safety, and other aspects.

BY BUS (OR TRAIN) TO THE ROYAL ORDNANCE FACTORY AT HAYES

Roger Atkinson

An interesting little book was published by Museum of London Archaeology in November 2011 on '*The Royal Ordnance Factory at Hayes*'. It has received very favourable reviews in industrial archaeological and academic circles, praising it for good original research in a new field. I take a more critical view of it because there are two important aspects of wartime armaments manufacture that it wholly ignores. Firstly, where the workers lived and whether some of them – or even many of them – may have been compulsorily 'directed to munitions', and secondly road transport in every aspect. In this article I am trying to partially remedy both of these, though the first only in terms of the apparent catchment area for the ROF workers, not their possible conscription. My road transport research covers only passenger transport. I know nothing about any goods transport by road that the ROF may have generated. (The book does deal, briefly, with the shipping of gun barrels out of the works by rail and their concealment under tarpaulins. It makes no mention of the use of road haulage, in or out),

Thankfully, the book does have a map or site plan of the ROF. One can deduce that it lay just to the south of the Great Western main line from Paddington to Bristol, and it was a mile west of Hayes & Harlington station at the end of a road called Bourne Avenue. Hayes & Harlington will have had a local train service from Hanwell & Elthorne and Southall to the east and from Slough, Uxbridge (Vine Street) and West Drayton to the west. (Indeed, a few workers may have travelled from stations farther distant).

Suburban expansion

The inter-war years had been a period when suburbia had spread out along main roads, to such an extent that the curbing of 'ribbon development' had been a major political issue. Middlesex was a county that benefitted from / was troubled by (depending on your point of view) London's

expansion and the growth of suburbia. Hayes, in broad terms, lay between two major arteries out of London, the Uxbridge Road to the north and the Bath Road to the south. By the time that they had reached Hayes, these two radial roads were more than four miles apart, the Uxbridge Road passing through Hayes and Bath Road passing Harlington at Harlington Corner.. There was a north-south road linking the two and passing over the GWR main line at Hayes & Harlington station – a goodly step from much of Harlington. Much of the 1920s/1930s housing development lay on Coldharbour Lane, in Hayes -- the section of road north of the station and up to the Uxbridge Road. Thus, the ROF itself lay to the west of, and on the other side of the railway tracks from, the principal Hayes housing area.

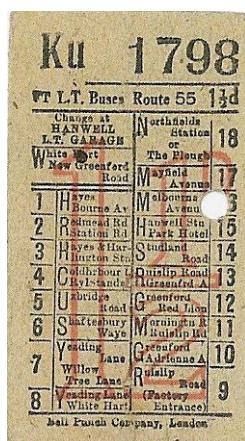
LPTB service expansion

Nonetheless, the housing development had been enough to generate regular, but sparse bus services by the *London General Omnibus Co Ltd* in the 1920s and enhanced ones by the mid-1930s by the *London Passenger Transport Board*. Any LPTB routes east of Uxbridge ranked as Central Area Buses, not Country Area Buses, (i.e. red buses, not green ones).; and this whole area lay east of Uxbridge. The Central Area bus map of 4 November 1939 showed Hayes Station served by routes 98, 120 and 140.

The 98, from Hounslow, came up from the Bath Road at Harlington Corner and diverged, after passing over the railway at Hayes station, to terminate at Hayes End. Normal service frequency 15 minutes. The 120 was a frequent service from Hounslow Heath via Osterley as far as Southall, but was extended on a 30 min frequency from Southall along the trolleybus-served Uxbridge Road, and down Coldharbour Lane to Hayes Station. The 140 came at 20 minute intervals down Coldharbour Lane to Hayes. It was a long route from Mill Hill in north London, serving several populous suburbs. We know from a useful Omnibus Society publication that the 140 had been extended from Northolt down to Hayes Station on 24 March 1937 – a useful indicator of the period in which more growth in Hayes had been taking place.

The 1939 bus services were substantially unchanged at December 1940.

In my article in the previous issue of this Journal, *'In the Shadow of Clayton-le-Moors'*, the difficulty of finding out when secretive wartime armaments factories started production was commented on. The best clue for the 'shadow' Bristol Aeroplane Company factory at Clayton-le-Moors had turned out to be the Accrington Corporation Electricity Committee Minutes – the power requirements had created an enormous additional load. The book on ROF, Hayes, sidesteps the problem of precise date of opening. We are left simply with construction of the factory having started in July 1940 and being 'largely completed' in November 1941, which seems rather slow for the urgency of wartime.



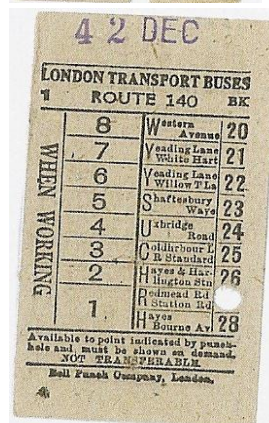
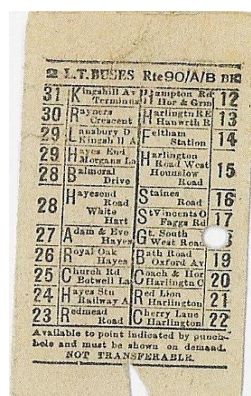
A ticket for route 55: note stage 1 'Hayes Bourne Av'

Opening of the Factory

But this is where bus services and tickets come to our rescue and offer very strong clues. A complete newcomer appeared on the scene on Wednesday 30 April 1941, Route 55, and it had geographical tickets to Hayes, Bourne Avenue – one is illustrated above. Until 29th April, the Hanwell Garage-operated 55 had potted up from Chiswick via Northfields and West Ealing and terminated at Greenford. But from 30th April, it was 'directed to munitions', and from Greenford it was extended along Ruislip Road to Yeading where it joined the 140 down to Hayes. But it did not terminate at Hayes Station. It carried on for a short way down Station Road, turned right into Dawley Road and along Bourne Avenue to the Ordnance Factory. The tickets, of course, observe wartime secrecy requirements and only say 'Bourne

Avenue'. That is the earliest Bourne Avenue ticket that I have been able to trace. It did not last very long, as, the factory may have opened at the end of April, as soon as some machinery had been installed, but took on extra labour when it was completed. Anyway, for whatever reason, there was a major reorganisation of the bus services just six months later.

On 29th October 1941, the 55 was cut back to Hayes & Harlington Station and the 140 (the long route from Mill Hill) was extended (on certain timings only) to Bourne Avenue. From the same date, the 98, which was still coming up from Hounslow and running via Hayes Station to Hayes End, was supplemented on the approach to Hayes from the south, by the 90A, which had run from Kew Gardens to Feltham, but was now extended from Feltham to Hayes End, providing a facility from another part of South West London.



Above: (top) a ticket for routes 90/A/B : note stage 24 'Hayes Stn'. (bottom): a ticket for route 140: note stage 28.

A further route extension to serve Hayes came on 13th May 1942, when Route 83, Golders Green –

LONDON TRANSPORT BUSES		
BK ROUTE 83 1 st d		
Available to point indicated by pin-hole and must be shown on demand. For transfer journeys only one change is allowed which must be made at indicated point to next available Bus.		
NOT TRANSFERABLE.		
33	Hayer Street Rly Arms	20
32	Dallas Terrace	21
31	Norwich Road Witcham Road	22
30	Southall Brent Rd	23
29	Duckley Road Princes of Wales	24
28	Southall O. Station	25
27	Town Hall Southall	26

The tickets illustrated here bear out these various changes. (Please bear with them being on wartime paper, not of the highest quality, with print not of outstanding clarity). The April and October dates are derived from the Transport Ticket Society's "London Transport Ticket History". The 42 DEC rubber stamp on the Route 140 ticket will have been made by the late Jack Baker of the Omnibus Society and can be safely relied upon as the date of issue.

However there is one informative detail to add from another source, a London Transport Timetable (for the Board's Officials only) of Central Area Buses from Wednesday July 5, 1944. This explains how that last tedious mile to and from the factory gates was made easier for the workers -- and it hints, though not by any means entirely clearly, at the principal shift times. The foregoing paragraphs show only the 140 actually running to Bourne Avenue. Workers coming by other bus routes or by train were decanted at Hayes & Harlington Station. The 1944 timetable shows, however, that there was a shuttle bus service, worked as 140, just between the station and Bourne Avenue.

The 83 shows a simpler pattern with buses from Hayes Station every ten minutes from 6.45 to 9.5 a.m. and 4.45 to 6.55 p.m., plus some later isolated journeys. (for the rest of the day, the old terminus at Southall, White Swan still applied).. The 83 had broadly corresponding timings to Hayes, though the first from Golders Green was not until 6.32 a.m, earlier journeys had started in service from either Hanwell or Hendon Garages.

Peak activity

The book tells us that the workforce reached its peak in January 1943 with 2,442 workers, gradually reducing to 1,672 by May 1944. It tells us nothing of whether they were conscripted or were attracted to the work by the generally higher wages paid in munitions factories.

When one gets down to the timetable and shuttle service to the factory gates run on Route 140, one's mind can boggle at the organisation and co-ordination required. The turning of the buses - probably using a small circuit round Blyth Road, Clarendon Road and Clayton Road, just north of the station - coupled with loading them and decanting passengers at Hayes Station on to onward buses, as well as those taking or arriving on GWR trains, must have been huge.

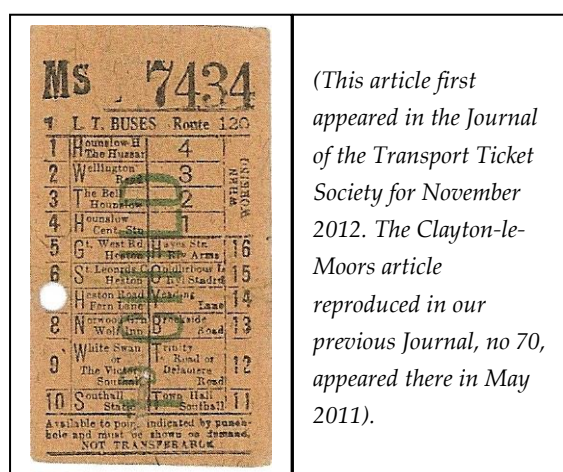
I am unaware of any season or rail-road through booking tickets that existed for the ROF buses. London Transport was not at all fond of special facilities; but for a conductor to have collected the standard 1½d fare from each passenger for the short ride from Bourne Avenue to Hayes Station, in the black-out, when they were coming off a ten or twelve hour shift will have fully justified the Billy Brown of London Town exhortation, which appeared on the reverse of the route 120 1d child ticket illustrated below, as:

"Billy Brown's had a rise in busmen's estimation

Since he paid the fare exact and named his destination".

Whilst I do not give a 'thumbs down' to the book, 'The Royal Ordnance Factory at Hayes'* for what it does tell us, it deserves great disapproval for telling us nothing about transport. Now can readers members add any more? Have 'rail' members, for example, any GWR Weeklies from Uxbridge (Vine Street) to Hayes & Harlington?

* "The Royal Ordnance Factory at Hayes" by Nick Holder, published by Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) 2011. Illustrated. £7.00 ISBN 978-1-901992-88-5, paperback 48pp.



(This article first appeared in the Journal of the Transport Ticket Society for November 2012. The Clayton-le-Moors article reproduced in our previous Journal, no 70, appeared there in May 2011).



BOOK REVIEWS

David Harvey **The Other Midland Reds: BMMO buses sold to other operators** Amberley Publishing Ltd., The Hill, Merrywalks, Stroud GL5 4EP, October 2012. ISBN 978-1-4456-1329-1. Paperback, 160pp. £15.99.

The phenomenon of large operators selling vehicles to other concerns is quite a familiar one to those interested in the bus industry. However, this has generally taken the form of selling vehicles previously run by the larger operator to other smaller concerns when life-expired, or as a result of being 'non-standard' within the fleet concerned (London Transport types being the best-known cases). However, this book records a somewhat different pattern, that of an operator building its own buses (akin to the railway companies, rather than the bus operating sector), and selling some of them brand new to other operators within the same group.

Midland Red (BMMO) was well known for building to its own designs, notably the 'SOS' ('Shire's Own Specification') models produced in the 1920s and 1930s. This book documents comprehensively the extent to which such vehicles were delivered new to other companies, notably Trent, Northern General and PMT. A comprehensive listing by batch is provided, and each type is described illustrated with examples delivered to other operators, and in some cases those operated directly by Midland Red itself. Many early examples were char-a-bancs (or a near-equivalent layout), followed by standard single-deckers, and subsequently double-deckers, broadly corresponding to types produced by main manufacturers as such as Leyland during this period. The main phase of deliveries to other companies is shown as being 1923 to 1933, with smaller numbers delivered up to 1940, very largely to Trent.

A very wide range of illustrations is provided, although quality does vary (some types presumably being less well documented than others). Presentation of the text is generally very clear, although a table of deliveries headed as those between 1923 and 1940 on pages 9 and 10, runs to

only 1933, with the continuation to 1940 being on page 98 (but years not explicitly shown). As the author himself remarks, a number of the early types have a somewhat 'ungainly' appearance. One also wonders what the views were of drivers, placed in very narrow cabs offside of the front engine, and in some cases with a fuel tank immediately beneath. The book concludes with an interesting 'might have been', the operation of S15 underfloor-engined vehicles as demonstrators with other BET companies in 1957, but with no orders resulting.

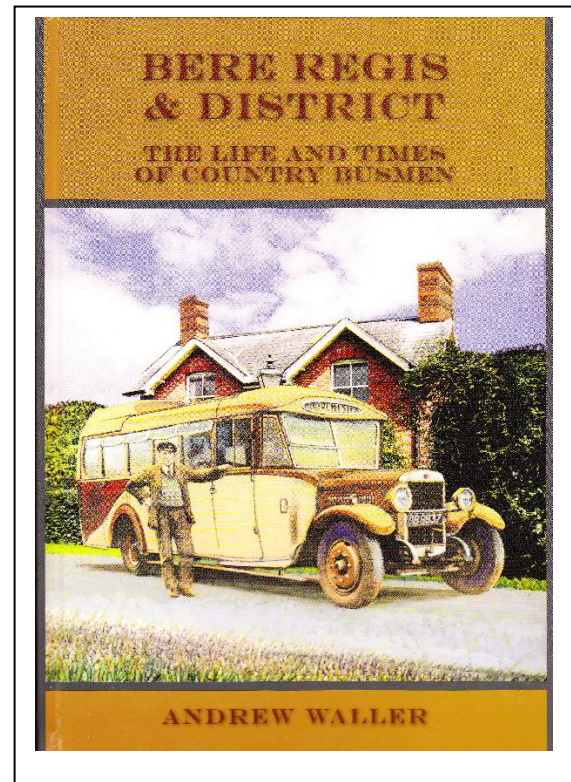
PRW

Andrew Waller **Bere Regis & District Motor Services: The Life and Time of Country Busmen.** The Hobnob Press, PO Box 1838, East Knoyle, Salisbury SP3 6FA. £25.00. Hardback, 166pp. ISBN 9 780946 418855.

The name of Bere Regis & District is a very familiar one to those interested in bus industry history, having at one time been among the larger of independent operators, and the largest within South West England. Taking its name from a village north of the main road between Poole and Dorchester, it served much of 'Thomas Hardy country' to the north, eventually extending as far as Sherborne, Yeovil and Shaftesbury.

A very comprehensive account of the history of the business is given, from the origins in country carriers serving in the area, to early motor operators, and the three owners who eventually came together to form the partnership (Toop, Ironside and Davis). The fact that the firm remained as a partnership (until the death of the last partner) means that detailed financial accounts are not available, but in place of this there emerges a fascinating story of the individuals involved (not only the owners, but managers and operating staff).

The zenith of the firm's stage carriage operations is shown to have been in the immediate post-war period, partly reflecting the general pattern of bus activity in Britain, but also a process of acquisition of smaller independents, notably during World War Two when many found it difficult to survive separately. The account concludes with a description of the successor operations under the Cawlett Group in the 1990s. There is some interesting speculation on whether the business might have survived with better financial management and a more long-term approach, especially in the 1980s when deregulation changed the operating environment.



While stage carriage operations are perhaps most readily associated with rural operators such as Bere Regis, this story makes clear the importance of schools and works contract activities, especially in the latter years of the company. The development of weekend express services for members of the armed forces notably from Portland, also provided a major source of revenue for many years. Although deregulation made the operation of local stage carriage services less secure, it did open up the opportunity for a daily express service from Weymouth to London, with considerable success.

The book is to full A4 format, permitting a generous size for illustrations, which are very numerous, with a section in colour. The very wide variety of vehicles operated, most acquired secondhand, is evident. A helpful map of the territory is provided, along with appendices documenting operators taken over, services at selected dates and depot allocations. A detailed fleet history is not provided, but the author indicates one is in preparation by others. At £25.00 this represents excellent value.

PRW

Dorian Gerhold **Bristol's Stage Coaches** The Hobnob Press, PO Box 1838, East Knoyle, Salisbury, SP3 6FA. ISBN 978-1-906978-15-0. 326pp, paperback. £17.95.

The cover illustration and title might suggest at first sight a traditional, somewhat sentimentalised and Dickensian view of the stage coach. However, this is immediately belied by the length and comprehensiveness of this book, which combines both a highly readable style – including, for example, recollection of passengers who used such services – and a more academic analysis, in which cost structures and productivity are assessed in a manner which has some parallels with current research work on rail performance, for example.

The main focus is on the trunk Bristol – Bath – London service, operated for about two hundred years, and attaining the peak of its performance in the 1830s shortly before the railway arrived and quickly displaced the coach. It was also the first route to be served by Palmer's mail coaches. Regional services from Bristol also receive attention in a separate chapter.

The analysis of cost structure indicates the predominance of 'provondor' (i.e. feeding the horses) as the main cost factor, followed by elements such as staff costs and vehicles. Most of the costs thus varied directly with output. Productivity is assessed through estimating what fares would have had to be charged (allowing for variations in factor input prices, and netting out duties) had no productivity increase taken place, and those actually observed. The influence of the turnpike roads, and the work of McAdam, in improving performance is clear, but as table 3 shows, there was by no means a direct correlation between creation of turnpike trusts and start of specific coach services. Pricing structures and the extent – or otherwise – of competition – are also assessed.

It is clear from appendix that the author has taken particular care to avoid 'double counting' from a naïve addition of all advertised services, to allow for duplication of references to inns at which pick-up occurred, the extent of through working, etc.

Overall, a very clear picture emerges of the manner in which substantial changes took place in the organisation and role of stage coaches up to their demise, including the major role of contractors (often innkeepers) who provided horses for each stage of the journey. A surprising feature of the initial impact of rail is that, as the Great Western London - Bristol route was opened in stages in 1838 -1841, coaches were placed on railway wagons for those sections of the journey covered by rail (an

early form of 'ro-ro' operation?), prior to rail displacing coaches entirely. Given the length and comprehensiveness of the account, the price represents excellent value. **PRW**

Tom Fort **The A303: Highway to the Sun** Simon & Schuster ISBN 978-0-85720-328-1. 344 pages, £14.99

This is a highly readable sally along the highway that runs from just south of Basingstoke in Hampshire to just north of Honiton in Devon. Tom Fort, who took his life in his hands to walk along some stretches of the A303, peppers his chapters with trenchant comments on the decisions, or lack of them, by successive governments as far as trunk roads are concerned. Should there or should there not be a tunnel under Salisbury Plain to end the notorious single carriageway bottleneck past Stonehenge?

Lest the reader should despair at the vagaries of government decision-making, Fort offers some delightful insights into what the traveller with time to spare might find down the byways that lead off the trunk road: a 19th century monument commemorating a 10th century murder, or a village whose eccentric one-time vicar vainly spent his every effort trying to solve a mathematical problem that had eluded Isaac Newton himself.

Such quaint insights, and rather unfavourable comments about roadside eateries, leaven the serious reflection of Fort's own views.

An experienced Radio 4 newsman, he writes that in 1994: "the government's own Standing Committee on Trunk Roads woke up to a truth that had dawned long before on everyone other than the wholly dim-witted: that building roads encouraged people to use them, or, as the committee vividly expressed it, 'induced traffic can and does occur quite extensively'."

What Fort calls the "big roads rhetoric" was reheated from time to time by ministers "to appease the roads lobby and foster an impression of boldness and tough thinking in the pursuit of the dynamic economy. But the roads themselves have generally been left where they started, on drawing boards."

Whether one shares Fort's views or no, he pays due attention to the serious matter of roads policy, and along the way tells many an engaging tale of what went on, or still goes on, in the hinterland on either side of this busy thoroughfare. The book includes illustrations in the text, a useful bibliography and a 12-page index.

AHW

REBUILDING BRITAIN FROM 1945

Glen McBirnie

Following the talk given by the author to the meeting on Coventry in October 2012, this article forms the first part of a review of the role of cement industry and its road transport operations.

If you wanted to buy cement between the two World Wars, you could only get it in cwt (hundredweight) jute hemp bags. After a time of regular use, encrusted cement on the insides of these bags made them extremely heavy, and you were getting a little more than 1 cwt of cement powder. Hand-mixing of sand, gravel and cement was still normal in most building activities, whether they were for private or commercial enterprise. However, things were about to change after the cessation of hostilities in 1945. The controlling government of the day, together with local authorities, were faced with an immediate and urgently required house-building operation which even to the passer-by was immense. With gradual return of industry, together with the likes of the Bedfordshire brick producers, it was quickly realised by the government that it faced a massive task of rebuilding whole swathes of land, particularly in London's East End and Docks areas, all of which had suffered continual bombardment: the sheer amount of material and work required was huge.

Whilst bricks, sand, gravel, lime, etc., could be transported reasonably safely and easily on available transport, cement powder (then carried in bags) had to be kept dry and be provided in the amounts requested often at very short notice, hence the covered box tipper type of vehicle came into its own. As time went on, the construction industry developed various forms of production, including the making of drainage pipes, slabs, kerbs, floors and building sections, all of which were produced from moulds. Daily deliveries of materials to these companies involved loads being tipped directly onto conveyor belts into storage. Using this method

enabled the makers of such products to use exact metered amounts, employing larger mechanical mixing procedures, all basically under cover. Many parts of the South Coast of England, such as Southampton – Portsmouth, along the Kent coast, and northward as far as Norfolk experienced terrible damage caused by enemy aircraft. Equally so, cities such as Bristol, Liverpool and Coventry and Birmingham were almost flattened. Given the extent of the total reconstruction nationwide, the amounts of material needed were enormous.

The shift to on-vehicle mixing

To meet the scale of construction industry needs, a new approach was needed, which arrived about seven or eight years after 1945 in the form of the lorry-mounted concrete mixer. Commonly known as the "transite mixer", it quickly became the norm. Initially designed and planned in the USA, using a four-wheeler chassis and fitted with a horizontal drive mixer. The idea was quickly adopted in here Britain, using a main elevated drum initially with its own power pack fitted in front of the drum. This innovation was to revolutionise all construction work, but it was particularly useful in general house-building, whereby using specially-extended chutes or channels carried on each mixer chassis, these could be fitted together to carry the ready-mixed cement to exactly where it was needed.

Basically, the era of the semi-automatically prepared mixed concrete had arrived, thereby easing the time-consuming hand-mixing operation. Pre-cast manufacture of larger foundation shapes, plus underground piling ventures would in time all benefit from truck-mixer operation. Prefabricated houses in early post-war years ('prefabs' as they became better known), consisted of an aluminium frame covered by asbestos sheets. It is said somewhere that there were some 2,000 components in each prefab, which could be assembled complete in four hours. In fact, many lasted well over 45 years, such was the strength of the design. In later years, better insulation using plasterboard sheeting extended the life of prefabs across the country. However, even with the new method of prepared read-mix, cement in sacks was still delivered in the

London area and further afield to meet the demand from builders' merchants and small builders alike, both by Tunnel and Blue Circle Cement.

(to be continued)

(All illustrations are drawn from the author's collection)

Below: 'ABC' stood for the Aberthaw – Bristol Channel Portland Cement company. Dating from around 1939 or earlier, HTX287 was a bonnetted Dodge. ABC put their faith in Perkins diesels and were rewarded with a reasonably long service life. Shown with 'top hat' dust cover, its fleet number 101.C probably related to internal duties within the cement works at Rhose. It may have carried bulk (or bags) when in fleet service. After 1962 ABC became part of Blue Circle Cement, who in turn now collectively belong to LaFarge of France. Note that this photo shows only an offside rear driving mirror – no flashers, only hand signals! The Perkins engine badge is prominent on the radiator.



Below:

For many years between the Wars, cement in sacks was the norm. The example shown here is ONY912, a Commer, fleet number 16 of Aberthaw and Bristol Channel Portland Cement, with load of 150 sacks, giving a 7 and half ton payload. Damage to the front offside wing can be seen.



Above: Another example of a flat-platform layout for carrying cement in bags can be seen in this Foden of George Thomas Earle of Wilmington cement works near Hull. With storage silos and the bag-loading shed as backdrop, KAT817 probably has a capacity of 8 tonnes, which equates to 160 separate bags. Earles were faithful to Foden for many years, both for flats and bulk tippers.

Below: This Foden 8-wheeler of Earles had a ram-fitted box, and dated from 1953. It would possibly have had a Gardner diesel engine, and Foden gearbox. Spare wheels were carried from new, as shown. These Fodens carried cement clinker and powdered cement on outward deliveries, at a 15 ton weight. Earles' fleet colour was a light biscuit brown, which black wheels and chassis. Fleet number 163 is typical of its time.



BOOK NOTICES

Travels in the Valleys. Dr Robert McCloy

Here is the story of the neglected but ubiquitous bus in the half century following the First War, told not through rose-tinted glasses but by an ex-council chief executive seeking to put the record straight. The focus is South Wales' largest towns, whose councils generally succeeded in their stewardship of public transport.

As a moving barrage, attention first fixes upon Merthyr Tydfil in depression, when the bus helped to make life tolerable by providing cheap mobility. Then to wartime Swansea where, amidst blitz and debris, the bus sustained essential movement. Thence to Cardiff in post-war austerity where, in the absence en masse of car and television, passenger numbers peaked as the population travelled to more widely-dispersed employment and recreation. Lastly the focus is on Newport in 'prosperity', with the car usurping the bus, as equity of provision, of a sort, yielded to economy, of a sort.

Throughout mincing state regulation is castigated as malign, except in wartime austerity. The popular calumny of councillors suborning officers is challenged. The stringencies of war are shown to have produced benefits to which an environmentally-concerned age can only aspire.

The bus helped to change society. For good it provided freedom of movement, and for bad (possibly) compromised local communities with their hitherto relatively stable institutions of chapel, local amenities and confined social networks.

Dr Robert McCloy was director of education and chief executive of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, and adviser to the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. A life-long transport enthusiast, he is currently chairman of the Roads and Road Transport History Association. He was educated in Lampeter, Oxford, Birmingham and Swansea.

This book is published by the Swansea Branch of the Historical Association. Paperback, £12.99
ISBN 978-0-9574178-0-9

Bere Regis and District Andrew Waller

This is the story of how three young men from Dorset villages created a partnership that in its heyday was the biggest privately owned bus concern in the south of England. For a while it ran well over 100 buses and coaches, serving the county's towns and villages, schools, army camps and factories. To meet the needs of soldiers and sailors going home for the weekend, it also reached distant corners of the land.

In the 1920s, as roads and motor vehicles improved, horsedrawn carriers, who had plied between village and market town for a century or more, gave way to country busmen. Indeed many of them sold their horses and bought their own motors. Dorset was too rural to tempt big companies to invest in the kind of transport network that more densely populated counties attracted, so smaller-scale local enterprise thrived.

This book traces how Bere Regis & District's network of rural bus services grew out of the labours of the 19th century carriers and the pioneer busmen of the early 20th century. By the end of World War II it was strong enough to keep World War II it was strong enough to keep expanding for two or three decades. Growing car ownership, the deaths of the three partners and Transport Acts in the 1980s each posed new challenges. Even so the business lasted in one form or another for almost 66 years, longer than any of the big bus companies that surrounded it.

(A review with publisher's details appears on page 12)

The author will be making copies available to members at R&RTHA AGM in March at £5 off the £25 cover price.