

The Roads and Road Transport History Association

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Spring Conference 2016

Gina M Dungworth

The R&RTHA Spring 2016 Conference was held, as is more or less traditional, at the Coventry Transport Museum, which seemed to have had a bit of rejuvenation over the winter – more on that later. After a brief AGM, the real business of the day was kicked off by new director Amy Graham.

Amy presented findings from a project carried out as part of her Master's degree in 'Heritage (Contemporary Practice)', which she completed at Kingston University. The project, *Bus Travel and the Heritage of Everyday Life*, focussed on the number 213 bus route – her regular commuting journey from her home in Worcester Park to Kingston upon Thames for her work as a Local History Officer as well as for her studies. With outward and return journeys taking an average of one hour each way, Amy had plenty of time to observe the world in and around the bus, listen to stories from her fellow travellers, and write up her findings in a series of field notebooks (a description of some of the work in this project appeared in our August 2014 issue).

The overarching theme of Amy's project is that transport history is everyone's history, and this feeling is intensified on public transport, buses in particular, where we are more or less forced to interact with our fellow travellers, rather than being isolated from them when travelling in private cars. This theme feeds into Amy's long-standing interest in how the ways in which people live their lives impacts on society and the environments in which they find themselves.



Newly-elected Director Amy Graham "becomes" the 213 bus as part of her research.

London bus route 213 connects Kingston and Sutton, and first ran on the 7th of September 1921; currently buses run every six to eight minutes throughout the day, passing Kingston Hospital and then travelling through New Malden, Old Malden, Worcester Park, North Cheam and Cheam before arriving at the Sutton Terminus. In the past, the route also took in Wimbledon and extended as far south as Banstead, while a sister

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route, the S213, continued north of Kingston to serve the factories there. Presently 36 separate bus routes interconnect with the 213, providing a huge level of mobility to local people.

Amy's past and ongoing research takes in people's journeys to and from the stops where they board and leave the 213, and she is compiling information on the surroundings of each stop, along with local history relating to it. Each bus stop survey appears on her blog (<https://213bus.wordpress.com/>) as it is completed, and she is also compiling a collection of bus route memories supplied by current and past passengers and drivers, as well as others who have interacted with the bus and its route. Other proposed outputs from the project include an 'Intrepid Traveller's Guide', phone apps to link users to the history of each bus stop they pass, an exhibition in the local museum, and a piece of performance art in which Amy dressed herself as the 213 bus and then travelled over part of the route. Trying out this last idea, Amy found that few people took any notice of her while on the bus, but she attracted a lot of interest from London United bus drivers at her destination.

Transport history as everyone's history

Wider issues addressed by Amy's project expand on the idea of transport history as everyone's history. Although the most common understanding of heritage is that of old buildings, many of us believe that a better definition would encompass any material item that can connect us to shared experiences. Heritage is not a neutral concept, but is based on what we value, and our cultural heritage can include intangible items such as folk music, dance, poetry, and the great Glaswegian tradition of adorning the Duke of Wellington's statue with traffic cones. Taking these ideas further, heritage can also include how we live our everyday lives, enacting the past by how we live in the present. Recording these experiences can enhance our shared experiences, but is this also heritage? Amy seems to think so, and I'm very much minded to agree.

Bus travel offers a heightened experience of everyday life, with passengers trapped as life goes on outside and is passed by, and with mundane choices such as how we choose to travel and where we choose to stop potentially leading to major consequences. Sadly, political decision makers look towards the economics of public transport rather than its social impact and this has led to huge variations in provision between London and the regions: resulting in decreased social mobility and employability for those living in areas with poor or no bus services. Bus provision and travel can, by contrast, lead to an increase in social equality and a greater understanding of diversity within society.

Since submitting her Master's project, Amy has continued to blog about her experiences and about the

history of each bus stop. She shared one set of stories with us, relating to stop K06 – the Gordon Road Bus Stop – which had been the home of the Norbiton Bus Garage and, previously, the site of 'Snapper's Castle' a Grade II pair of crenelated semi-detached houses which were demolished in the 1970s to allow for the expansion of the bus garage. Sadly, the garage itself is no more, having been demolished in 1991 and the site now houses a Wickes DIY store.

Amy's presentation inspired some lively comments and questions, which sadly had to be curtailed in order for us to partake of the excellent buffet the museum had provided and – in my case at least – explore some of the new exhibits as well as visiting old favourites.

There's an excellent post on Amy's blog detailing her experiences of visiting the Museum. In my quick whiz round over the lunch break I noticed new or updated sections on World War I, Industrial Disputes within the Motor Industry and Land Speed Record Attempts as well as adverts for an upcoming exhibition on tractors – 'From Factory to Field' – all of which mean I'll be paying at least one return visit over the summer, and before the Autumn Conference.

David Holding's presentation on Wage Negotiations and Staff Shortages in the Bus Industry appears as a paper elsewhere in this journal, so I shall let him tell that story and pass swiftly on to the third speaker of the day.

The Southern Railway's Response to Bus Competition

Dr Reg Davies, who retired from the railways in 1997, presented highlights of his 2014 PhD thesis *The Southern Railway's Response to Bus Competition, 1923 – 1939*, opening with a quote from M.A. Cameron, onetime LNER Passenger Manager, and in 1929 a member of the road transport section of LNER Southern Area: 'a lot more could have been done if instead of just investing in bus companies the railways had started to run some of their own passenger services by road, which they could have done'. However, Dr Davies speculated, it is not at all certain whether the companies would have wanted to do so.

The Southern Railway was founded in 1923 by the amalgamation of three systems and covered an area south and east of a line from London to Exeter along

with parts of North Devon and Cornwall. It was the smallest of the four grouping companies created at that time, and 75% of its business was passenger transport. In the 1920s, railways were facing increasing pressure from road vehicles for the passenger business, and attempts began to be made to give road transport powers to the railway companies.

The first three attempts at including roads in a railways act were unsuccessful, and in the meantime cartels formed within the bus industry. Then, in 1928, five Road Transport Bills were introduced, one for each amalgamated Railway Company. Opposition came from the bus companies, led by Sidney Garcke of Tilling & British Automobile Traction and the London and Provincial Omnibus Owners' Association. Garcke was able to successfully prove that private cars presented a greater threat to passenger railways (and indeed to buses) than public road transport; however, four acts were passed – the Metropolitan Railway's Bill was not proven – enabling railway companies to directly operate bus services in their areas and to make arrangements with local bus companies.

The Acts imposed conditions on fares and services on railway companies with no equivalents applied to bus companies. The result was ownership by the railway companies of 'significant but not controlling interests' in 56 bus companies by 1934. Bus companies slowly became less hostile to railway involvement, and probably benefited overall in the end. However, the advantages foreseen by the railway companies in 1921, when the idea of allied bus services was first mooted never materialised: probably because of the increased power of the bus company cartels by the time the Acts were eventually passed. Under the circumstances, the Southern Railway achieved the best possible result, through cooperation with the bus companies, and through careful management of local demand for services such as through ticketing on both rail and bus services.

Dr Davies thesis is available in its entirety online at <http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/8905/>.

All in all, another fascinating meeting, and I look forward to seeing how our speakers' work progresses in the future.

Gina M Dungworth

Autumn Conference 2016

The date for our Autumn Conference is set for **Saturday, 29th October 2016** at our usual venue, the Transport Museum, Coventry. Our principal speaker will be **Roger Torode**, a career transport professional

with London Transport through to Transport for London, and author of the acclaimed recent work *Privatising London's Buses*, (see review section).

AGM Business

Philip Kirk

Twenty members assembled at Coventry for the Association's Annual General Meeting. Our chairman, Bob McCloy, gives his report elsewhere in this edition of the Journal, so here is a summary of other salient points:

- A query was raised over the Association's commitment – particularly financial – to the Wales on Wheels event. It was confirmed that there was no financial commitment other than publicity, and that the event had grown to be something of a landmark event in the Swansea area. [See notice of the 2016 event elsewhere in this Journal].
- The question of a list of members' interests being circulated was raised. It was confirmed that this had been delayed whilst members were canvassed individually for their permission. That process had been completed, and the list would be distributed shortly. [see insert to this Journal].
- The accounts for the year ended 31st December were accepted. The situation with regard to Corporation Tax exposure on external sales of the Companion was accepted. An allowance for this was made in the accounts and the actual amount will be calculated before final submission.

Finally, Bob McCloy was re-elected as a director (and chairman), and David Holding and Amy Graham were appointed directors.

Chairman's Report

Robert McCloy

The Directors' Meeting

The meeting of the directors on February 13 at Newport turned out to be a great success, helped possibly by its location, the famous Celtic Manor. The agenda included a review of the Association's activities in recent years and preparations for the AGM on March 19 at Coventry, reported separately in this edition. As for the former, it was agreed that achievement had included the regular and timely publication of 'The Journal', the lively web page, the administration of membership arrangements, the steady and loyal attendance at the Coventry meetings, and the general high calibre of presentations in talks and papers. What had so far been unsuccessful were attempts to collaborate with organizations with related interests, in

spite of spirited efforts, and holding additional meetings away from Coventry.

Much discussion centred upon the Association's purpose and market. The Association's purposes remained valid but more was needed to reach out to a wider audience. The antiquarian and nostalgic, and the past generally, must be accommodated, but some emphasis should be placed upon incisive commentary concerning current issues, such as the effects of mobility and migration on community. Recruitment of younger members, especially those embarking on formal studies in transport was a high priority. Two particular initiatives were approved: developing the relationship with the University of Wales Trinity Saint David and proposing to the AGM the appointment of Amy Graham, representative of a younger membership, as a director. As for the former, Mike Phillips confirmed that Professor Stephen Hole, the newly-appointed dean of engineering, the faculty embracing transport, was eager to foster the relationship, in the mutual interests of the university and the association, as a matter of urgency. Arrangements would shortly be made for the directors and secretary to meet Professor Hole to work out the details.

Wales on Wheels

As we go to press, final preparations are in hand for 'Wales on Wheels'. Our colleagues in the Swansea Bus Museum have proposed that this year's programme, fixed for Saturday, May 14, in Swansea, be expanded with trips in vintage vehicles along the coast to the Mumbles. Overall, the programme should be very exciting and comprehensive, including static displays, second-hand stalls of transport memorabilia, and a members' dinner on the Friday evening, March 13, at the Marriott Hotel.

The Journal

As noted, we have successfully resumed the regular publication of 'The Journal' once a quarter, immeasurably assisted by the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. The Association is truly very appreciative of this vital contribution. The University has kindly agreed to the print a larger version at no additional cost and it is intended to discuss the development of 'The Journal' at our meeting with Professor Hole.

Until next time

As ever, should you suppose that, as far as you are concerned, the bus has taken the wrong turning, please ring the bell! The Committee would be pleased to consider your comments.

The Development of Bus Services in Zimbabwe

Peter White

This paper is an expanded version of a talk given to the Roads and Road Transport History Association in Coventry in March 2013. It draws on the author's experience in consultancy work in that country in 1984 (as a specialist in the Zimbabwe National Transport Study – ZNTS) and subsequently in 1994, both visits focusing on the rural and long-distance services. The first visit in particular provided an opportunity to obtain information on the earlier history of services in that country, as well as examining the then current situation, which is itself now 'history'.

The background context

The country of Zimbabwe covers a substantial region of southern Africa, forming part of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) along with South Africa, Zambia, Botswana and other countries in that region. Prior to internationally-recognised independence in 1980 it had a variety of names:

Southern Rhodesia. A 'self-governing' crown colony, established in 1923, previously run by the British South Africa Company, with a government directly elected by part of the population (my visit in 1984 provided an opportunity to see the two chambers of parliament, the Senate with red leather seats, and House of Assembly with green leather, in direct imitation of the Houses of Lords and Commons at Westminster). Together with Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and Nyasaland (now Malawi) it formed the Central African Federation from 1953, for which Salisbury was the headquarters, until the other two countries gained independence. A revised constitution was adopted in 1961, including formation of a 'Council of Chiefs' to give expression to opinions of those living in the 'Tribal Trust Lands' (see also below). A useful account is provided by Donald Smith (1).

Rhodesia. From 1965, following the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) on 11 November 1965.

The composite title of 'Zimbabwe Rhodesia' was briefly adopted in 1980, with Bishop Abel Muzorewa as a figurehead, prior to adoption of the present title. A description of events during the transitional period is provided by Parsons (2).

Even today, the population density of the country is relatively low. Almost all of the growth occurred during the twentieth century, rising from only about 1 million in 1900, to 4 million in 1950 and 8 million in 1980 (3), which was then rising at about 3.5% per

annum and has grown strongly since. By that time, Harare (formerly Salisbury), the capital, had a population of about 800,000, and the second city, Bulawayo, about 400,000. Other major centres – Gweru (formerly Gwelo), Kwekwe (formerly Que Que), and Mutare (formerly Umtali) - had under 100,000 each, and the urban population was growing at about 5% per annum.



The long-distance bus station at Bulawayo on 16 August 1984, showing a longer version of the AVM vehicle with forward entrance, operated by P.Hall & Co ('Shu-Shine'), destined for Gokwe. Note the volume of goods placed on the roof.

The economic development was based primarily on agriculture, notably extensive commercial farming within the main central belt (the 'high veld'), extending from the north east of the country around Harare, through the Midland region, and around Bulawayo, and also into the south eastern region around Masvingo (previously known as Fort Victoria). This included cereal production (especially maize), cotton, tobacco, and beef cattle farming. A significant industrial base also developed, with a manufacturing industry in the two main cities (Harare and Bulawayo) and some other centres in the central belt (such as Gweru). Heavier industry developed around the Wankie (now Hwange) coalfield in the north, including iron and steel production. Tourism played a major role, notably Victoria Falls on the Zambesi (which forms the northern border with Zambia). Development of the Kariba Dam in the 1950s created a source of hydro-electric power.

However, the population distribution did not necessarily correlate closely with economic development. Apart from some concentration in the main urban areas, the central commercial farming belt was settled at relatively low densities. Much of the rural population was located in communal (subsistence) farming areas, notably in the north of the country toward the Zambesi, and the south west (Matabeleland); the colonial term 'Tribal Trust Lands' (TTLs) for such areas was still to be found in use in some quarters in 1984.



A line-up of single-deckers, mostly Guys, operated by the Rhodesia Omnibus Company, seen at City Square Terminus in Bulawayo (original source: Passenger Transport 12 August 1953)

The lack of employment in the subsistence farming areas, and substantial industrial activity in larger towns, led to recruitment of a labour force, typically of young men moving to an urban area for substantial periods, but still regarding the rural area as 'home' and returning there for visits, described by O'Connor as 'labour circulation' (4). This resulted in a marked imbalance in the sex ratios in the main urban areas. Workers from the communal farming areas lived in hostels in the urban areas, rather than their own houses. As an approximate estimate, about 25% of the urban workforce (and probably a higher share of those in manufacturing) in 1984 were in this position. In comparison to other parts of Africa, the population of European origin was substantially greater, although still in minority, accounting for about 25% of the population of Harare (and 20% in Bulawayo) in 1969 (5) - it continued to grow in absolute terms into the 1970s, although by then falling as a percentage. A small Asian community also developed in urban areas.

Early transport services

The railways played a major role in development, the 3ft 6 in 'Cape' gauge system being extended from the south, to form a trunk route through Bulawayo and the central belt to Harare. Subsequently routes extended from Bulawayo to Victoria Falls and Zambia, from Harare to the Mozambique border at Mutare, and a later direct link to South Africa at Beitbridge. Passenger services were generally limited in frequency.

Claxton (6) records that feeder road services by the railways commenced in June 1927, serving Sinoia (now Chinoyi), north of Harare. Fifteen services were running within two years, subsidised by the government to serve developing areas (mainly farming). The title 'Road Motor Services' was adopted, and in 1937 vehicles were fitted with Gardner diesel engines. RMS also introduced a service in the south east of the country between West Nicholson, Fort Victoria and Beitbridge soon after South African Railways opened their line to Beitbridge in August 1929. A number of combined passenger and goods vehicles were operated - one on display at the Railway Museum in Bulawayo in 1984 was a 1952 Leyland Octopus, with a small passenger compartment. Claxton also observes that

some limited passenger services were provided on early narrow gauge railways serving mines (such as Banket, and Sinoia). Road Motor Services continued in operation for many years - into the 1990s - as a freight operation.

Little information is available on early bus services, although some operations ran pre-World War Two. However, a survey of independent operators conducted as part of the ZNTS produced responses indicating that some firms dated back to the late 1940s (Pullen, and African Matabeleland), and 1950s (Hall, Mpepu and Penlandaba) whose operations I observed in 1984, but most from the 1960s and 1970s.

Operations in the Bulawayo area were provided by a municipal undertaking, established just after World War Two, of which little is known, but were acquired by the Bulawayo Omnibus Company Ltd in 1948, a company which was part of the African Transport Group (see also below), operating in Kenya and other countries to the north. In 1950 the company extended its operations to the towns of Gwelo (now Gweru) and Umtali (now Mutare), previously without bus services, and in 1951 changed its name to the Rhodesia Omnibus Company (ROC). A comprehensive account of its early development was provided by Lt-Col J.E. Everington (7), the Managing Director of ROC, in 1953. Bulawayo operations had commenced on 1 December 1948, and by 1953 a fleet of 41 Guy Arab, 4 Daimler and 2 Leyland single-deckers was in operation, of which 35 were based in Bulawayo, 6 in Umtali 4 in Gwelo, and 2 in Que Que. In 1952, some 4.36 million passengers were carried. Strong seasonality of demand was found, and also marked peaks during the working day, and little evening traffic. A subsidiary company, the Rhodesia Touring Company Ltd., was formed in 1952 and operated tours to game reserves and Victoria Falls. Long-distance interurban services had also recently commenced.

United Transport

Substantial development of bus services in the country was stimulated through investment by the Red and White (R&W) United Transport Company, by 1954 known as 'United Transport (Africa)', under the chairmanship of John Watts (8). Sales of the UK R&W operations to the state in 1950 released capital for investment elsewhere. In 1954 agreement was reached with the Salisbury city council to run urban services under an agreement initially running for 21 years, with L. Smith appointed as engineer (lately depot engineer at Stroud). United had then recently acquired Transrhodes Services, who also ran some Salisbury city services, subsequently which it proposed to merge with the Salisbury city operations. A local independent, Bernard Vito, also ran in the city until an exclusive franchise was granted to United from 1956.

By early 1955 'Rhodesia United Transport' was in operation (9), as a joint venture of John Watts' United Transport and British Electric Traction (BET). It took over Thatcher, Hobson and Co., a firm established 25 years earlier, running both goods and passenger services, renaming it as 'Central African Road Services Ltd'. It had previously been owned by the Northern Rhodesian government. Recently-delivered vehicles comprised Leyland goods chassis fitted with 53-seater bus bodies.



The conductors' uniform inspection mirror at Bulawayo depot in 1953. This was still in use on the author's visit to ZOC at Bulawayo in 1984 (original source: Passenger Transport 12 August 1953)

A fairly comprehensive description by 'The Editor' in 1956, 'Africa is Becoming Bus-minded', gave fuller details (10). The United Transport Company Ltd of Chepstow was described as having entered African operation in 1949, then with two major subsidiaries, the African Transport Co. Ltd of Nairobi, and Rhodesia United Transport Ltd. of Salisbury. BET was said to have a 'substantial minority interest, approaching 40%'. The Nairobi company controlled thirteen central African goods and passenger operations, having in acquired the Overseas Motor Transport Co Ltd., of Commander F.R.Hare, R.N. (retd), running in a number of eastern and central African countries. Hare had established operations in Devon in 1919 which expanded until its sale to the National Omnibus and Transport Co Ltd. in 1927. He then invested the proceeds of the sale in setting up Overseas Motor Transport Ltd., with a registered office in London; in 1929 (the Red & White company's investment twenty

years later can be seen as parallel). It purchased the Bulawayo municipal operation, established just after the war, in 1948 or 1949, forming the Bulawayo Omnibus Company (11). The company was renamed African Transport Co Ltd. in 1951.

The Salisbury operation in 1956 then comprised 80 buses, including Leyland Tiger Cubs, Royal Tigers, and Comets, as well as Leyland-MCW integral Olympics. Long-distance services were then planned to Johannesburg, using Royal Tiger Worldmaster coaches. The ROC operations in Bulawayo were still being managed by J.E.Everington, with a fleet of 60 vehicles, including the exclusive city franchise, and also the urban operations in Umtali and Gwelo. Under the same management was the Rhodesia Touring Co Ltd., running a long-distance Bulawayo – Salisbury - Umtali express route, and coach tours. Within the major urban areas, exclusive franchises were granted, covering a radius of 15 miles (26 km) in the cases of Bulawayo and Salisbury, and smaller areas in franchises within Gwelo (now Gweru) and Umtali (now Mutare) granted to ROC in 1950. BET took over the whole ownership of United Transport Ltd., forming United Transport Overseas Ltd in November 1971 (12).

Bus and coach design

Early technical press illustrations shown vehicles from the 1950s very similar to those of Britain at the time, including Guy Arabs, Bedford OBs and Leyland underfloor-engined single-deckers. A number of ex-London Guy Arab double-deckers were imported in the 1950s to inaugurate urban services in Salisbury (13). However, a striking feature was the adoption of more generous dimensions than found in Britain, permitting a length of up to 35 ft, and width of 8 ft 3 in, from 1953. In 1962 Leyland supplied the Rhodesia United Transport Group with six-wheeler single deckers, a variant of the Royal Tiger Worldmaster with the 0.680 engine (14).

A noteworthy feature by the time of my first visit in 1984 was the use of full-length single-deckers for most services, but on a two-axle layout. Gross permitted two-axle vehicle weight (15.9 tonnes) was similar to that in Britain (then 17 tonnes, with 10.5 tonnes on the rear axle) but a very marked contrast existed in the axleload distribution. Whereas in British (and now EU) regulations a much heavier load is permitted on the twin-tyre rear axle, in Zimbabwe they were very similar, at 7.7 tonnes for the front (single tyre, steering) axle, and 8.2 tonnes for the rear. A possible justification for this might be found in the 'fourth power' rule, a widely-used measure of the relative wear and tear imposed by different axle loadings on road structures, derived from tests in the 1960s by the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO), i.e. the impact is in proportion to the fourth power of the

axleload. For example, raising the axleload from 8 to 10 tonnes (a ratio of 1.25) would cause the fourth power value to rise from 8 to the power of 4 (i.e. 4,096) to 10,000 (a ratio of 2.44). The substantial proportion of earth and gravel roads would also make axleloads a more important factor in Zimbabwe than in Britain.

The situation at UDI

At the time of UDI, British-owned bus companies running in Rhodesia comprised:

- Express Motorways Africa (Central) Ltd., Salisbury (running long-distance services)
- United Bus Services Ltd., Salisbury (operating longer-distance services, and also some urban services outwith main cities)
- Salisbury United Omnibus Co., Salisbury (operating urban services)
- Rhodesia Omnibus Co. (ROC), Bulawayo

There were described as being '....connected with United Transport Overseas Ltd, a subsidiary of the United Transport Ltd. of Chepstow, and in which the BET has some interests'. Some freight subsidiaries were also operated, two of which - Bulwark Transport and Swift Transport Service - were active at the time of my visits described below. A visit in the early 1960s reported by D.J.Smith (15) indicates that ROC then ran 84 buses and one coach, seven being based at an outstation at Livingstone, now part of Zambia. Salisbury United ran 135 single-deckers, mostly Leylands. Most bodywork was built locally, for example by Zambesi Coachworks Ltd.

Fleet composition

The 1965 vehicle deliveries had already been received from British manufacturers by the time of UDI, but clearly future supplies would be threatened by restrictions on British exports. Donald Smith (16) indicates that a somewhat confusing range of restrictions on exports was applied immediately after UDI in November 1965, becoming a complete embargo from late February 1966. Operators thus had to look for suppliers other than Leyland and other British manufacturers.

The response was to develop a home-produced vehicle, the AVM, manufactured on a large scale from about 1974 by the Dahmer company (a Lonrho subsidiary), with locally-built bodywork. This comprised a chassis of similar form to previously-imported vehicles. i.e. a high frame, with front-mounted engine. Steel for principal chassis members and some other components was manufactured within the country, and exported for rolling, then re-imported. Earlier models were on a relatively short wheelbase, giving a seating capacity of about 64 (with 'five across' seating), later on a longer

chassis giving a seating capacity of 76. Operators also became adept at recycling components and materials. A notable feature on my first visit in 1984 was extensive use of metal spraying and reworking of components in the light industrial estates of Harare such as Workington.



A Runyaryaro AVM on the North Road (linking Harare and Kariba) near Lion's Den, August 1984. The road would be typical of the standard of tarmac main routes.

I was able to inspect police records for the total fleet (including urban buses) then licenced, which comprised just over 4,000 in mid-1984, with a several hundred dating back to the 1960s and a few even earlier (how many of these remained operational was uncertain). A substantial peak in deliveries had occurred in the late 1970s, with a very strong peak in the early 1980s of about 400 per year in 1981 and 1982, as import restrictions were lifted and economic growth occurred.

The situation in 1984

Following formal recognition of the independent state of Zimbabwe, trade restrictions were lifted, and substantial economic growth took place. Operators were once again free to import from manufacturers such as Leyland. My visit in 1984 was as part of a team conducting the Zimbabwe National Transport Study (ZNTS), undertaken by a Swedish consultancy (SWECO), and examining all aspects of the transport system, including road infrastructure, railways, aviation, road freight and passenger operations, etc. Urban operations did not form part of the study, which was concerned with rural and long-distance movement. My role was to examine the role of bus and coach services in this sector, building on work already conducted by other members of the team, and a rural bus study by another consultancy in the previous year. My visit coincided with one by Robert Brook, then Chief Executive of the National Bus Company in Britain. I attended a Chartered Institute of Transport meeting he addressed in Harare, which provided an opportunity to make contact with those in the industry (also giving a talk myself to the local section later in my

visit). In particular, I became quite well-acquainted with senior managers of the United group of companies. Contrary to the common perception that many of the people from Britain might speak with a 'South African' or colonial-type of accent, I quickly became familiar with a wide variety of British regional accents, including West Country and Yorkshire. While many aspects of the business culture seemed quite familiar, there were some oddities. On requesting street directions in central Harare, I was advised to 'turn right at the third robot', generating a somewhat surrealistic spectacle of dalek-like structures being placed in the city centre. They duly turned out to be the expression for traffic lights, whose sequence of automatic operation does indeed have a robotic quality. I quickly found that reading the weekly 'Financial Gazette' gave a far better guide to what was going on than government-controlled newspapers such as the 'Herald'. However, a reference to 'The Old Lady of Samora Machel Avenue' likewise seemed inexplicable, until realising that this was a reference to the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe and its address (by analogy with 'The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street' for the Bank of England).

Bus industry structure in 1984



Friday evening demand building up at Harare Bus Station, August 1984

While United dominated in the larger urban areas and on some longer-distance routes, I quickly found that the majority of services to rural regions were operated by locally-based independents, whose activities had not been covered in reports in the British technical press, some of the larger companies approaching 100 vehicles (such as P.Hall and Co of Bulawayo, trading as 'Shu-Shine Bus Service'). A number of the medium-sized and larger operations were owned by members of the Asian community, but most independents were black Zimbabwean citizens.

About 170 operators were running in the country in 1983, with about 1700 road service permits on issue - each vehicle had to display its own permit, similar to the O-licence discs in Britain, but specific to certain route(s) - and a total fleet of about 1800 (implying an

average of about 11 vehicles per operator). Permits both for buses and goods vehicles were issued by the Controller of Road Motor Transportation (RMT) in Harare, resulting in a highly centralised administration. Applications received were published in the weekly Zimbabwean Government Gazette, with a six week period of notice for objections. In earlier years, a fairly restrictive system had applied, protecting the incumbent operator and encouraging acquisition of companies (analogous to impacts of the 1930 Road Traffic Act in Britain), with United and larger independents such as Hall expanding by this means, but by 1984 a more liberalised system had been adopted, making entry easier. About 60% of rural and long-distance bus-kilometres were run on tarmac road, the other 40% on earth or gravel. Strong competition was to be found on main routes (but not in terms of price).

A much more marked contrast to practice in Britain was to be found in the structure of the rural and long-distance services. In Britain, a rural network typically comprises a series of local services, each focused on a long-established market town whose antiquity might be illustrated by buildings such as churches. Interurban links are formed by local services between market towns, and some longer-distance services, including express coaches. In contrast, the very low population density in rural areas of Zimbabwe meant that the development pattern was very scattered and often quite recent. Tracing authorised routes on a map proved difficult, as the final terminal was often merely identified by the name of a farm or mission station, rather than a sizeable settlement. Local market centres had formed in some of the commercial farming areas (such as Kwe Kwe and Gweru in the Midlands), but were largely absent elsewhere.

In the communal farming areas in particular, employment opportunities were very limited, and strong pattern had developed of weekly commuting from such areas to major towns with manufacturing industries such as Harare. Workers would be based in hostels, returning home at weekends. This generated a very strong peak in demand on Friday evenings (not totally unlike that at Victoria Coach Station), with a corresponding peak from rural areas on Sunday afternoons and evenings. Some workers returned home as frequently as every weekend, others at wider intervals, or seasonally, producing marked peaks at times such as Christmas. Interviews with operators confirmed this strong pattern. The manufacturing sector had probably grown significantly during the UDI period, as a response to developing self-sufficiency. Employment opportunities were thus generated for male workers from the communal farming areas, and income which they could pass back to their families living there. However, this often involved very long journeys, in the order of 100-200 km in many cases.

Ironically, in the regions around Harare these passed through the commercial agricultural areas which generated fewer employment opportunities. One could thus see considerable prosperity had developed, but with a very unequal distribution.



Coach-seated AVMs of Express Motorways, at Rusape on the Harare - Mutare service, April 1994

A further consequence of this pattern of travel was that the main long-distance bus stations were often located adjacent to the industrial employment zones, rather than city centres. This was particularly noticeable in the case of Mbare bus station in Harare, necessitating a local bus journey from the city centre, and also Kwe Kwe, although Bulawayo was more centrally located. A further feature of the longer-distance services was the substantial volumes of goods carried, in addition to passenger's own luggage (which itself could be extensive), given the absence of regular postal services in the more remote areas. Larger operators such as Hall provided a fixed-rate tariff, dependent on the item carried (up to the size of a wardrobe or bed). These items were typically carried on the roofs of vehicles, hardly assisting stability.

Vehicle supply from the early 1980s

In terms of vehicle supply, Leyland had re-entered the market after formal independence, but with modest results. The AVM model had become very well-established, not only due to lack of alternatives, but also its very robust design, well-suited to poor road conditions. Conversely, the Leyland CD series vehicles suffered from a less robust structure, notably in the front axle assembly, which made them more prone to failure under poor road conditions (especially given the axleload distribution mentioned earlier). Their general reliability was also poorer. This became evident in many discussions with operators, notably a small independent in Bulawayo who was underneath his CD series vehicle when I arrived at his depot. He emerged from that position to inform me (a) he was a qualified mechanical engineer, and (b) his views on the Leyland design, then returning to work on the vehicle. I had already observed problems with the front-end design when talking to operators on my first visit to Africa, to

Tanzania in 1981, but little change seemed to have taken place at Leyland following complaints from there (the Tanzanian operators had little choice, the vehicles being supplied as part of British aid, and with no local alternative). A complacency which was affecting the whole group at that time was perhaps to blame.

Operating patterns

A further consequence of the pattern of passenger movement on the rural and long-distance services was that operators tended to be based in larger urban areas rather than the 'rural' end of the route, since for the greater part of the week that was where vehicles meeting the weekend peak would be based. This was also where fuel, spares and tyres could be obtained. In particular, I recall a day spent in Bulawayo in which I managed to interview about eight operators in succession, who served extensive areas of North and South Matabeleland from that city (I had arranged to see fewer operators in advance but as my visit became known, was invited to visit others while in the city. I gained the impression that a sympathetic ear was much appreciated, even if I had negligible power to influence issues such as such supply of reliable vehicles or materials).



An older Mercedes 302 coach of Express Motorways on the Harare Airport service, April 1994

An issue affecting operators of long-distance services was the quality of the road system. While much better than in many other African countries (such as Tanzania) this nonetheless included substantial sections of gravel or 'narrow mat' roads, in addition well-surfaced tarmac roads on the principal links. This is a common pattern, associated with limited capital investment, and the rightful priority being given to the busier routes. A trade-off thus exists between higher operating costs (notably for tyres, fuel and suspension systems) and the capital costs of better roads, for which well-established appraisal systems such as those developed by the Transport Research Laboratory in Britain are available. A further consequence may be that vehicle life is reduced. Safety can also be affected, since vehicles may be less stable on poorer roads, and in particular the 'narrow mat' road format (a single strip of tarmac, with gravel either side) carried an obvious risk of head-on collision, since vehicles travelling in both directions tended to keep to the tarmac part of the road. The late

Friday evening/Sunday evening weekend travel pattern also resulted in much activity being after dark, aggravating safety risks. In general, good tarmac roads were found in the more heavily-populated areas but with an odd pattern when passing through the commercial farming areas, where district councils were empowered to upgrade to tarmac surfaces. A long-distance route might thus pass over a sequence of alternating tarmac and gravel sections, rather than a single transition from one type to another.



An example of a 'narrow mat' road in August 1984, a single-lane tarmac strip with gravel either side.

Express services

Although carrying passengers long distances, the buses used were of a very basic interior design, unlikely to attract those with an alternative mode available. However, the quality of the main road network was generally good, enabling a reasonably smooth ride. In 1984 a number of express services were also in operation, using vehicles with a lower seating capacity and generally more comfortable layout (although still without air conditioning, and with front-mounted engines producing high noise levels). The 'Express Motorways' subsidiary of United Transport provided a number of major links, such as Harare - Kwe Kwe - Bulawayo, and Harare - Rusape - Mutare (on the Mozambican border). In 1984 these were operated largely by elderly, locally-bodied Mercedes. By 1994 these had been superseded by AVMs, seating 48, as I sampled on a journey from Harare to Rusape. Independent operators also served this market, notably Ajay Motorways. Fares in 1984 were approximately double the rate per kilometre of bus services as such.

The very limited rail network – geared largely to freight demand – meant that even on trunk routes very low frequencies were offered. For example, at the time of the 1984 study, the only rail passenger service between Harare and Bulawayo consisted of a single overnight journey each way (with antiquated sleeper and seated stock). Express coach services this provided a wider range of timings (and took about the same time as rail), as well as serving destinations not covered by rail.

Regulation

A further challenge affecting operators was the regulatory system. This followed the British 1930 Act in many respects, with operators requiring a permit for each route (as described above), specifying timetable and any duplicate vehicles permitted (each of the latter being required to display their own permit). Furthermore, individually-identified vehicles were authorised for specific routes, making it difficult for operators to deploy their fleets efficiently. Fare regulation was also strict, imposing a common fare as a flat rate per kilometre travelled. In 1984 this was 2 Zimbabwe cents (at that time there were about 1.7 Zimbabwe dollars to the £, hence 2 cents was about 1 pence). In order to break-even, operators were not only attracted to the denser routes, but there was also a disincentive to serve non-tarmaced roads, since there was no differential in the fare level to reflect higher operating costs over such roads (conversely, other countries in similar circumstances, such as Tanzania, did so). There was also little incentive to cater for shorter-distance traffic (e.g. 20-30 kilometres) since if the same peak timings in demand occurred, it made far more sense to run a vehicle to and from the remoter areas, getting better utilisation and revenue as a result. The low fare made it necessary to operate at high load factors to break-even. Roadside surveys on major routes carried out in an earlier phase of the ZNTS indicated figures in the order of 60%, with substantial overloading (in relation to seating capacity) in some cases.



Gokwe in August 1984. Located in the communal farming area in the north of the country, this was a hub at which development was being encouraged. Seen here are rival United and Tombs Motorways AVMs. The road had been tarmaced by 1994.

As part of its rural development policy, the government was aiming to create hubs in more remote rural regions, which could develop as market towns and also provide education and medical services. One such was Gokwe, in the communal farming area, about 80 km north of Gweru, in 1984 reached by gravel and earth roads (although by the time of my second visit in 1994 the

main link from the Harare – Bulawayo road had been tarmaced). However, providing local feeder routes into a centre such as this could be financially unattractive to an operator, due to the lack of any taper in the fare scale mentioned above.

Urban services

Although my own work in 1984 and 1994 was concerned with rural and long-distance services, I also had the opportunity to observe urban operations, in 1984 dominated by United subsidiaries as described above. The Harare franchise initiated in 1956 ran for 21 years to 1975, with a subsequent 12 year franchise running to 1987. In Bulawayo, ZOC held a franchise initially awarded in 1948 (see above), a 12-year franchise then being due to expire in 1988.

A clear distinction could be seen between the affluent low-density suburbs, lying mainly to the north of the city centre in Harare, whose inhabitants had a high level of car ownership, which generated little bus demand in consequence, and the high-density suburbs – often further out from the centre – which generated high demand for bus services. A similar disparity was found in Bulawayo.

In 1984 the Harare United fleet comprised 601 vehicles, all single-deck, of which 223 were older Albion Valiant/Leyland vehicles, 64 short-wheelbase Leylands and Mercedes, and 314 full-length AVMs. ZOC operated a fleet of 444, of which about 320 were based in Bulawayo, of which 162 were Leyland CDs built before 1974, 30 AVM 64 seaters built after 1974, and 252 AVM 76-seaters.

However, in the case of Harare, a major housing development had taken place from the late 1970s well to the south of the city in the area known as Chitungwiza, part of which, Seki, lay beyond the 26 km limit of the United franchise. The Ministry of Local Government and Town Planning created a new franchise to serve this area, which was awarded for a ten year period from 1977 to 1987 to a new operator, Zimbabwe Express Motors (ZEM), operating a fleet of about 67 full-length AVMs in 1984. It was financed partly through some existing independent operators based elsewhere in the country and also active in rural/long-distance sector. However, the company was then encountering some financial difficulties, having been placed in provisional liquidation in May 1983. Very high bus demand was created from this area, but with a very concentrated journey to work peak.

The standard AVM model, when used on rural and long-distance services, carried bodywork fitted with a single hinged door, to the rear of the front axle. All services carried conductors, whose role included getting baggage and goods to and from the roof rack as

well as collecting fares (and, in some cases, touring for trade at major bus stations when their vehicle was in competition with other operators for the same destination). In urban service, the front overhang of the same chassis enabled an entrance to be fitted adjacent to the driver and engine, for one-person-operation. The sequence of high steps was hardly convenient for the user, although no worse than some British designs (such as Ford R-series) in use at that time. United operated ticket-selling kiosks at busy points to reduce boarding times.



Rival manufacturers at the Harare Agricultural Show in August 1984: the AVM exhibit, showing an 11 metre variant of its domestic model for export to other African countries.

Also to be seen in both in Harare and Bulawayo in 1984 were 'Emergency Taxis', legalised in 1982 (the term 'Emergency' referred to legislation under which they were authorised, not their pattern of service), i.e. shared taxis seating up to 7 (in practice often carrying more), working on fixed routes with fares determined by the municipality. 437 had been approved in Harare by mid-1984, and 130 in Bulawayo. These were authorised to relieve overcrowding on the bus networks.

Following the creation of ZUPCO (see below) a further franchise was granted in Harare, due to end in 1994, but scrapped by the government in 1993 due to inadequate service. 'Commuter omnibuses' were then authorised, enabling operation by other firms of full-sized vehicles – such as those based on an AVM tractor unit with a passenger trailer – mainly for the journey to work peak, many of which were in evidence on my visit in 1994.



Rival manufacturers at the Harare Agricultural Show in August 1984: the Leyland CD45, complete with Land Rover on the roof to demonstrate body strength

The 1984 report

A report was duly compiled as part of the ZNTS and submitted to government, analysing the problems facing the industry, and advocating means of encouraging local service provision within rural areas. By way of adding some local character to an otherwise dry technical report I included a quote from a then recently-published Zimbabwean novel, 'The Non-Believer's Journey', essentially a description of a citizen who is 'radicalised' (in the current jargon) as a result of his treatment during the UDI period. Much of it is set during a lengthy bus journey, hence the title. The author described the journey as one in which the passengers would begin to sing to pass the time:

".. When once the bus got on to the main tarred road, clear of the town, one of the passengers would start intoning a song. Invariably, there would be one or two men with Mbiras [stringed instruments], and they would start to play. The whole bus would take up the melody....." (17).



An AVM of Matemai at Rusape in April 1994, showing the 'safety wheel' device on the front offside wheel.

However, Zimbabwean government officials were not noted for a sense of flexibility, even at that time. In their queries on the draft report, they wished to know whether this was a correct factual description. I had by

that time returned to the UK, but a member of the study team still in Zimbabwe was duly dispatched to make a long-distance bus journey to observe whether it was the case that passengers were singing on the journey. He went. They did.

Developments by 1994

I was in Zimbabwe again in 1994, participating in a study by another consultancy which effectively formed a follow-up study to that of 1984. Relatively little change had taken place 'on the ground' in the rural service pattern, although the United Transport operations had been brought into partial state ownership through ZUPCO (Zimbabwe United Passenger Transport Company). However, due to limited supply of urban services marked expansion had taken place in informal operations, not only the 'emergency' taxis to be seen in 1984, but extensive minibus operation in cities such as Harare, together with larger vehicles.

The rigid fares control found in 1984 was still applied in 1994, albeit with the flat rate per kilometre adjusted for inflation, set at 10 cents per kilometre in the latter year (subsequently inflation reached astronomical levels, the Zimbabwean Dollar becoming almost worthless, and the US Dollar effectively functioning as a currency within the country). Despite the inflation, a generally optimistic view was taken of both economic and political development by many people I spoke to, both within the bus industry and more widely. The severe instability and economic decline was to follow later.

As part of the study in which I was then involved in, an estimate was made that interurban and rural buses then carried about 100 million bus trips per year, compared with about 2 to 3 million for air and rail together (although, as in Britain at present, those modes often received far more attention in government planning).

One consequence of protecting local industries was that tyre production and supply was limited to a local manufacturer, with high import duties on rubber discouraging use of alternatives. Production quality was poor, increasing the risk of tyre blow-outs, especially given the heavily-loaded front axle (as described above). Consequences could be particularly severe on earth or gravel roads, or running on the 'narrow mat' type described above. As an interim measure a device called a 'safety wheel' had been adopted from 1993 (see illustration), comprising a steel wheel of a slightly smaller diameter than an inflated tyre. Should a tyre burst occur, the vehicle would tilt slightly, but remain upright then than catastrophic overturning occurring. The vehicle would not be able to continue in service, but could be brought to a halt more safely. However, the 'safety wheel' itself added further unsprung weight to the front axle.

A major feature of my second visit was chairing a two-day conference to discuss future options for the industry, attended by operators, local authorities, government representatives and suppliers, the opening speech being by the Minister then responsible for Transport, Dennis Norman. The intention was to provide opportunities for general discussion rather than make formal decisions, but particularly strong concern was expressed about safety issues (a major accident with numerous fatalities had occurred at Mount Darwin in the north of the country one day before the conference). As a result a resolution was formulated, calling for import restrictions on tyres to be reduced, in order that higher quality tyres be more easily imported. Other issues raised at the conference included the effects of the rigid fares control, and quality of bus stations provided by local authorities. The axle weight issue was raised, one option being the development of three-axle layouts (as found on vehicles operating international services into Zimbabwe at that time), enabling a reduction in front axle loading without increasing load per axle in the rear and thus increasing road maintenance costs.

In conclusion, it should be noted that further scope may exist for research into the evolution of the bus industry in Zimbabwe, on the roles of both British-financed companies, and locally-funded operators.

All photographs are by the author unless otherwise stated.

- (13) Bus & Coach December 1962.
- (14) Everington, J.E. *op cit*
- (15) D.J.Smith the smoke thunders: A Look at Southern Rhodesia' Buses Illustrated May 1964, pp 164-167.

Pat Campany, our retiring membership secretary

Chairman Bob McCloy writes:

It is fitting that we should record the Association's considerable sense of gratitude to Pat Campany. With effect from May 1, Pat hands over the task of Membership Secretary to Annette Gravell. Pat undertook the task at the Chairman's prompting, having good reason, from experience of Pat's work in Kingston, where they had worked together, to know that she would carry it out most effectively. This confidence has been overwhelmingly vindicated. Order and discipline has been firmly imposed and Annette

Notes

- (1) Smith, Donald 'Rhodesia: The Problem'. Robert Maxwell, Oxford, 1969
- (2) Parsons, Sir Anthony 'From Southern Rhodesia to Zimbabwe, 1965 - 1988' International Relations, 1988.
- (3) From Zimbabwe National Transport Study Report (hereinafter ZNTS) 1985
- (4) O'Connor, Anthony. The African City. Hutchinson University Library for Africa, London, 1983, page 68
- (5) O'Connor, *op cit*, page 103
- (6) Claxton. Anthony Railways of Rhodesia. David & Charles, Newton Abbott, 1973
- (7) Everington, J.E. 'Pioneering in Southern Rhodesia' Passenger Transport, 12 August 1953, pp 209-215.
- (8) 'United Transport and Rhodesia' (news item), Bus & Coach May 1954.
- (9) 'African Developments' (news item) Bus & Coach February 1955
- (10) Pages 348-355, probably from 'Leyland Journal' September 1956 Transport Ticket Society journal, December 1965.
- (11) Transport Ticket Society journal, December 1965.
- (12) Transport Ticket Society journal, August 1974.
- (16) Donald Smith, *op cit*, chapter V.
- (17) Nyamfukudza, Stanley 'The Non-Believer's Journey'. Zimbabwe Publishing House, Harare, 1983, page 24.

fully briefed on the well-oiled procedures. Our grateful thanks.

Pat responds:

As I am now retiring from the role of Membership Secretary I should like to take this opportunity to say how much I have enjoyed working with the Association and attending the meetings and events. I am sure you will be ably assisted from 1 May by the new Membership Secretary, Annette Gravell and meanwhile I should like to wish you every success in the future.

I am sure we all would like to express our thanks to Pat for a job well done.

Book Reviews

'On the Dust' Malcolm Bates. Kelsey Publishing Group, Cudham, 2016. 97pp, illustrated. £7.95.

"What a load of rubbish!" – no, not this bookazine, but its subject matter – as the sub-title has it: municipal vehicle development. This includes not only dustcarts, but also gully-emptiers, loading shovels, and landfill-compactors. Shelvoke & Drewry of Letchworth feature prominently, but by no means exclusively: Vulcan, Thornycroft, Dennis and Karrier amongst others provide the chassis for a variety of the bodies illustrated. The Scammell mechanical horse appears, both as tractive unit for refuse collection trailers, but also as the basis of a three-wheeled municipal vehicle. Only two pages are devoted exclusively to electric refuse carts, so that Birmingham's large fleet, meticulously recorded by Roger de Boer in 1990, is simply included in a list of local authorities using battery-electrics. The evolution of body types, from Chelsea and Newcastle to moving-floor and various methods of compaction, is thoroughly covered. Good use is made of manufacturers' catalogues and advertising, and the author's professional involvement in the industry gives authority to the text (although this would have benefitted from closer copy-editing). In conclusion, the reviewer finds it interesting that two principal manufacturers, Shelvoke & Drewry and Eagle Engineering, of Letchworth and Warwick respectively, were not located in major industrial centres. The same is also true of Chaseside (Hertford), Weatherill (Welwyn Garden City), and Lacre (various Hertfordshire locations).

RAS

Privatising London's Buses Roger Torode. Capital Transport Publishing Ltd., Ground Floor, 117 Old Roar Road, St Leonards-on-Sea, TN37 7HD. www.capitaltransport.com £35.00. 2015. 256pp, hardback with extensive colour illustrations. ISBN 978-1-854-143945.

The period covered in this volume extends from that prior to 1983, when the poor performance of London Transport's bus operations was becoming very apparent, to 1999, with a reflection completed in 2015. The privatisation process as such was completed after a short but intensive phase, in 1994. It thus covers a wider range of issues, especially the development of competitive tendering of service contracts, and the various formations of area-based business units within London Transport prior to the privatisation process as such. The abortive proposals for deregulation on lines similar to those outside London – still an active prospect at the time of privatisation – are also covered.

As the author - who writes from extensive managerial experience within LT and its successors - rightly notes,

the period considered might seem rather recent for 'history' to be recorded, but the timing is in fact highly appropriate, given that many of those involved in the process were available for interview, with recollections sufficiently recent to provide a very comprehensive range of detail. The time since the mains stages were completed also enables a broader perspective to be taken. The major events are familiar to the reviewer – indeed, I participated in some of those described (such as the initial briefing for new operators about the tendering process, and the 'AMOS' minibus service hearings) – but I found that I gained a far more extensive understanding of the whole process through reading this very comprehensive work.

Awareness of the poor performance of LT's then bus operations developed as comparisons with other publicly-owned operators, such as those of the PTEs, were made. A high proportion of 'lost mileage' (23% over the whole network in 1978) was observed, leading to a very erratic pattern of service for the passenger. Very high staffing levels, especially among the engineering and administrative functions, were to be seen. A highly centralised system based on the workshops at Chiswick and Aldenham was geared to traditional designs such as the RT and RM, but adjusted very poorly to rear-engined vehicles introduced in large numbers from the early 1970s.

The attempts to restructure operations into districts, such as Cardinal and Selkent, had some impact on improving performance, but the need for far more radical change was evident. Under the 1984 Act which transferred LT to central government control (becoming 'London Regional Transport') competitive tendering was introduced, initially on the fringes where existing small operators already had bases. The shift to a higher proportion of tendering work, which also included LRT's own bus operations, is clearly described. Individual operating subsidiaries were then set up, in which the management had considerably greater freedom, albeit still constrained in many respects by central management. The shift to their privatisation, completed in 1994, then created a pattern in which a considerable proportion of the companies were bought out by management and/or employees (such as London United, Centrewest and Metroline) whilst others went directly to larger groups (such as the sale of Selkent to Stagecoach). As the author notes, operations by smaller independents was never a major proportion of the tendered operations, despite some expectations that this would be the case. However, within a few years almost all the privatised companies had passed into the ownership of larger groups in some cases based outside the UK (such as London United to Transdev). One subsidiary, London Forest, experienced considerable difficulties (on which the author writes from direct experience) and did not survive to the privatisation phase.

The very range of direct interviews with those involved greatly adds to the value and readability of this book. Interviewees and respondents include almost all the senior management of the companies set up by LRT, many of the other operators entering the market (such as Len Wright) and those involved in the planning and tendering process, together with politicians such as Steven Norris. Particular insights are provided into the challenges faced by management teams seeking to buy their 'own' companies, and the (often demanding) role of financial institutions in enabling such changes. Some management teams, such as that led by David Humphrey at London United, would clearly have preferred the greater freedom of action that deregulation within London would have permitted, but others saw the regulated tendering regime as a preferable outcome.

As well as reducing costs through cuts in engineering and administrative functions, costs were only brought down to acceptable levels within the existing operations by radical changes in wages and working conditions of platform staff, necessitating determined negotiations between management and trade unions. Although at the end of the period covered, operations were initially breaking-even, the resultant worsening caused high levels of staff turnover, necessitating improved wages and conditions shortly afterward.

In some ways, one can see the processes described as creating a sequence of events which, almost by historical accident, produced a very favourable outcome – reduced operating costs, expanded services, simplified fare structures (notably through 'Fares Fair' in the early 1980s) and above all, vastly improved service reliability.

The presentation is of very high quality, with a very extensive range of illustrations complementing the text. The wide variety of liveries during the earlier phase of tendering and privatisation – now once more reverted to all-over red – adds to the visual appeal. Appendices provide a time-line of major dates, and brief biographies of those involved in the process. Given the references at various points in the text to changes in service levels, costs, reliability etc., it might also have been useful to show a summary table giving these changes on aggregate up to 1999, but this is a minor point. At £35 the value for money is very good, and purchase can be recommended both to those with a general interest in bus history, and those looking at these issues from a more 'academic' perspective. **PRW**

A.C.Hutton. The history of a Basingstoke transport company Steven Wimbush and Stuart Wise, 2016, 41pp, illustrated. £10 post-free from Stuart Wise, 5 Humber Close, Thatcham, RG18 3DT.

Like so many road haulage histories, this is a fascinating read with numerous aspects, some of them

unexpected. To numerate them in detail would be to replicate this interesting book: suffice to say that Thornycrofts (as employers), farming and miniature railways were important aspects of the life of the founder, Alan Hutton. Farming (from 1919) gave the impetus to road haulage, since Hutton could carry others' produce to London with his own. The significant management role of John Fernie Remington is duly recorded; this began in the mid-1930s when Hutton was much involved in running miniature railways, and continued through the war years, and into and beyond nationalisation. The book includes fleet lists of both Hutton's and BRS Basingstoke and a number of illustrations, including a Fowler 'Warrior'.

RAS

From Rail to Road and Back Again? A Century of Transport Competition and Interdependency. Edited by Ralf Roth and Colin Divall. Hardback, 415pp. ISBN 978 1 409 440468 (hardback), £80. Also available in e-book formats. Published by Ashgate in 2015 (subsequently, Ashgate was taken over by Routledge/Taylor & Francis, www.routledge.com)

It is often the case that rail transport history is documented far more thoroughly than that for roads. In part, this is due to the extensive documentation that exists, notably arising from the formation of railway companies and the securing (or otherwise) of parliamentary powers for construction, documented both in 'enthusiast' and academic texts. Conversely, road infrastructure development has been covered far less thoroughly, apart from some of that relating to motorways and their equivalents elsewhere. This book can be seen as resetting the balance by treating each in similar degree of depth. Edited by Ralf Roth (Johann Wolfgang Goethe-University, Frankfurt am Main) and Colin Divall (University of York), it brings together a wide range of academic research, covering developments both in those countries and also the USA, France and Italy. The idea for the book was first presented at the Seventh International Conference on the History of Transport, Traffic and Mobility (T²M) in 2009.

The first part, 'Rails and roads between competition and interdependency', begins by examining the growth of railways in the nineteenth century, emphasising the relatively low densities of networks outside Europe, and slower development in southern and eastern Europe than the north and west. Subsequent chapters examine the railways' responses to growing road competition, and the extent to which rail was hampered by regulatory bodies, notably those imposing a rigid system of pricing for freight based on the value of goods, which created extensive opportunities for road competition. The attempts by railway companies to influence such matters are reviewed in chapters by Roy Edwards (with some parallels to the work by Reg

Davies described elsewhere in this issue) and Colin Divall. The attempts by the LNER to involve its staff in marketing of goods services are noteworthy. Several chapters examine the role of container traffic, highlighting the developments in railway containers (initially much smaller than the term 'container' denotes today), especially in the USA (by Albert Churella). The more familiar sea containers, based initially on the ISO 8ft x 8 ft cross-section, did not emerge until later. The subsequent development of Freightliner within the railway system of Britain is documented by Terry Gourvish.

France and Germany offered very marked contrasts during the inter-war period, with France enthusiastically adopting road transport (even with support of the railways in some cases, anxious to cut back low-density movement and use road services as feeders), described by Bruno Carrière. Conversely, rail retained a dominant position in road freight in Germany up to 1938 (having taken over the Schenker business in 1932), despite development of the autobahn system – which seems to have been developed in advance of traffic demand – as described by Richard Vahrenkamp (indeed, express coach services remained severely restricted in Germany until January 2013, but have since seen spectacular growth, a phase too late to be mentioned in this volume).

Part II of this volume, 'Mobility on roads: an innovative success story of the twentieth century – but rail survived' – documents the rapid growth in road traffic and (partial) displacement of rail-based transport, notably that of the Paris street tramways in 1937. Reiner Fink views car transport as an example of 'creative destruction' of an earlier system, based on a Schumpeterian view of innovation, showing the very rapid growth from an early stage in car ownership in the USA (already reaching about 100 cars per 1000 population by the early 1920s), and the extent to which per capita rates developed most strongly in the lower-density regions with poorer rail access. Bruce Seely's chapter on 'Inventing the American Road' stresses the role of the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) in setting technical standards and planning methods. Reiner Ruppmann's chapter 11 surveys the literature of highway network planning Europe, including noteworthy examples from the Netherlands and Italy, plus the GB case. In many instances, early sketch maps proved remarkably similar to motorway networks later developed, such as the 'Tea Room Plan' of 1946, in

Britain, described in Peter Merriman's chapter on modernisation of Britain's road network between 1937 and 1970. Mathieu Flonneau's chapter describes changes in public transport in the Paris region in 1920s and 1930s, showing the victory of 'automobilism' (a term also including buses), leading to tramway displacement. He also notes the possible irony in subsequent developments on tramways in France since the 1980s (although perhaps understating the effectiveness of trams as effective movers of people, as distinct from their effects on other road traffic). In contrast, the case of Turin, described by Massimo Moraglio, is one in which trams remained the dominant public transport mode, despite the presence of Fiat as a major local employer. The concluding chapter by Ruppmann looks at the role of Frankfurt am Main as a transport hub, and its (slowly-developed) links with the autobahn system.

Overall, this is clearly a work of reference, priced at level for libraries rather than the private reader. It is comprehensive and well-illustrated (although a scale on some of the maps would have been helpful). Use of English as a common language, but not the first language of all the authors, sometimes produces odd effects (notably the description of the distinguished British civil engineer Thomas Telford as a 'bricklayer' on page 294). A more general concern is the neutrality of language adopted in respect of the interwar German and Italian regimes – while this may be valid for purely technical matters, it is questionable in other respects.

The later period covered in this book overlaps with the development of systematic transport planning methodology from the 1950s, described in text books still in use. It would certainly be useful for those engaged in current transport planning practice to be aware of the wider historical perspective provided in this book. However, the opposite also applies. For example, Fink derives relationships between car ownership and per capita income from source data, but seems unaware of the extensive literature on car ownership forecasting models (for example, those developed by TRL and its predecessors from the 1950s onward). The closing words of the title "...and back again?" appear to be purely rhetorical, yet an examination of recent trends would show a revival in rail use (notably the faster growth in passenger rail use than road traffic in recent years in Britain), and a shift back to population growth in large cities. **PRW**

Route branding – a follow up

The feature by Ian Souter on route branding in our previous issue resulted in the following observations from our member R.J. Williamson of Studley.

Reference Ian Souter's interesting article, re paragraph 1, roller indicators were also known as 'linens' by the Bristol Tramways & Carriage Co., and later Bristol Omnibus Co. Ltd., referring to the material on which they were printed. Also, in Bradford C.T. days, and Huddersfield Joint Omnibus Committee (the

Corporation, with Railway interests) they were known as 'Destination Curtains'. This term 'curtain' was official, as original drawings have been seen.

The mention of coloured lights and coloured cars (particularly Glasgow) also had great significance in the widespread illiteracy at the time, particularly amongst the passengers using trams, etc. This method was also a great help to sailors and passengers from foreign ships arriving in GB, where of course they had no knowledge of English, but could identify their destination by colours.

Regarding 'letters' and numbers, a point worth mentioning is that Portsmouth Corporation buses had lettered routes, whilst the trolleybuses had route numbers. This is of course a huge subject as I have discovered during the past 55 years of research and recording.

Finally, regarding 'route branding' it is considered that this is a complete waste of time, effort and paint! It is acceptable if all the rostered vehicles are fit for service but, over the years; many examples have been seen with buses branded for, say, the 28 working on the 52. This is only a fictitious example, but readers will no doubt see the same kind of nonsense!"

Ian Souter has added the following observations in response:

"I have captured Mr Williamson's additional names for destination blinds for my list. Interesting in its own right is how such a wide range of terms was generated for one item which had appeared in a wide variety of places within a short period of time. The term 'linens' reminds me of my student days in the 1960s when I discovered that a colleague from Northern Ireland had access to sources of old blinds ex Belfast Corporation. These were sought after items locally as they would be washed out to recover the original high quality linen fabric. He promised to recover a sample of a trolleybus blind and duly produced the goods, but from the names listed I suspect it was from a tram, not a trolleybus. Incidentally:

1. All Glasgow trolleybus blinds used white lettering on a green, rather than black background.
2. Different operators had preferences for different fonts in their destination displays, the most obvious example being London Transport. Manchester Corporation used a font which squared off curves, thus making life easier for those producing blinds by hand. This style was copied by Aberdeen Corporation when a new manager was appointed who'd previously been in a senior position in Manchester.
3. The use of linen as the base material for destination blinds gave way to plastic film and to electronic dot matrix displays, initially with a fixed name

display, later with scrolling displays which can convey more information, if only there was enough time to read it all. There is much scope indeed to expand the history of displays and the thinking behind them.

The suggestion that route coloured cars (and also route symbols) were there to assist illiterates is one I'm familiar with, but I'm not convinced that that was the prime reason for creating the practice. For someone looking for a car/vehicle on a particular route, a distinctive colour will be apparent long before the text of any form of destination name can be read, even by someone with good eyesight. For similar reasons of identification, a coloured light at night will be a benefit when illumination of the destination name was a problem. Note that when route numbers and letters made their appearance, they were usually in a much bigger font than that for the destination name. Note also that the constabulary started to take a view on the use of red lights projected from the leading end of a vehicle as road traffic volumes increased.

Portsmouth was not unique in using route letters for motorbuses, when the trams and their successor trolleybuses had used numbers. That said, they were in a minority and a diminishing minority at that. Two major bus operators, Midland General and Crosville, used a combination of letters and numbers. In both cases the prefix letter indicated the 'operating centre' of the route. The 'C' prefix in Crosville covered routes from Chester, 'K' for those from Crewe, etc, and the 'E' prefix in Midland General was for routes heading north west from Alfreton, including the 'E2' of blessed memory which passed the entrance to the Tramway Museum at Crich on its way to Matlock. Standardisation and early computerisation by the National Bus Company wiped out such eccentricities.

A route-branded vehicle on the wrong route is something I was very conscious of when preparing the article. My mention of the confusion in Glasgow was drawn from Bill Tollan's 'Wearing of the Green' book and was from his personal recollections as a conductor. What I did not have space to include was reference to the myriad shipyard/industrial workers specials which cut across the basic routes to spread further confusion amongst the uninitiated because Glasgow had no unbranded cars. This was in contrast to Aberdeen; the body of Aberdeen car no 15 which was rescued a couple of years ago would have finished up as such an unbranded car."

[Note: Some operators retain a set of vehicles in a plain generic livery that can be deployed on branded routes when required, to avoid sending the 'wrong' vehicle out in service. Nottingham City Transport do this, for example. The use of area prefixes is common practice in London, 'H' for example being used for routes in the Hounslow area and also, somewhat confusingly, in Harrow. Ed]

Wage Bargaining and Staff Shortages in the Bus Industry

David Holding

This paper is based on a presentation given at the March meeting

Introduction

My article in the previous issue of this Journal (no 83) dealt with events of 50 years ago, which to some seems like yesterday but to others qualifies as history. This paper carries forward experience from my period at West Yorkshire Road Car to the following two years at Thames Valley Traction, but focusing on the theme of wage bargaining structures and their relationship to persistent problems of staff shortages. To set the issues in context, the historical background and subsequent developments are also summarised.

My title might suggest that staff shortages are connected solely with financial rewards but clearly they are not; also important are:

1. unsocial and irregular hours;
2. sometimes the people staff have to deal with; and
3. social status (which I shall mention later), but money is also has a major role, especially where a perception of inequity exists.

The period covered is the late 1960s and early 1970s. For the bus industry this period was in a way one of crisis, but it was also one where a major re-structuring of the industry took place.

The History

The bus industry experienced major consolidation and increased stability following the 1930 Road Traffic Act, which led to wider recognition of trade unions and national bargaining structures. The body set up for the company sector (BET, Tilling, Scottish Bus Group and some independents) was the National Council for the Omnibus Industry (NCOI). For the municipal sector a National Joint Industrial Council (NJIC) was set up, while London Transport created its own separate bargaining structure. The trade unions supported national bargaining as pulling up wages in poorer areas, while employers believed it restrained wages to a reasonable level. During the 1930s working on the buses was a good job; it was seen as physically safe, secure and having the status of a uniformed occupation. In mining areas it was better than going down the pit.

During World War Two bus work was a reserved occupation: many no doubt worked on the buses as an alternative to the armed forces, and remained after 1945.

In the post-war years, growth in the economy resumed, bringing increased prosperity and leading to the Harold Macmillan years of "You never had it so good". However, staff shortages first began to be experienced in London from the early 1950s. London Transport's recruitment programme in Barbados at that time is well known, but it is perhaps not so widely recognised that the LTE also recruited in southern Ireland and that this was a major contributor to the Irish community in north-west London. At the same time car ownership increased and passenger numbers began to fall. Staff shortages spread to other major cities and affluent areas on their outskirts from the early 1960s.

It then began to become apparent that nationally determined and rigid wage agreements were not appropriate everywhere, and that labour markets were entirely different between, for example, the Home Counties and rural Wales. In all cases the same basic rate applied to drivers, conductors, mechanics and other grades, with minimal opportunity for local flexibility; perhaps the most important variation was that companies had discretion over payment for meal breaks, with the effect of making rates slightly higher or lower.

Reactions and Responses to Problems of the 1950s

Reactions and responses to the twin problems of falling passenger numbers and crew shortages comprised:

1. "Good housekeeping" or, as it was later described, "managed decline". This involved reductions in mileage operated, tailoring services to lower demand levels, reducing the number of vehicles operated and matching the number of staff required more closely to those available.
2. Single as opposed to dual manning of vehicles, but development of this was very slow. By the mid-1960s nearly all single deck buses were technically suitable for operation without a conductor, but very few were so operated. There were of course exceptions to this, some companies running all or most single-deckers on a "one-man" basis. Single-manning of double-deckers was not legally permitted until 1966.

A number of reasons can be identified for the slow rate of conversion:

1. Principle - "taking bread from conductors' mouths" was a view held, even though conductor shortages existed and no redundancy would arise. Possibly in the short term conductors might experience a loss of overtime but it tended to creep back.
2. Drivers wanted to drive, not have the responsibility of cash handling.

3. Rewards: The standard "one-man" bonus of 15% represented below 10% at prevailing marginal taxation rates, for doing two people's jobs. Paul Lacey's history of Thames Valley Traction mentions an occasion at Newbury, where management and the trade union agreed an extension of single-manning, but volunteers could not be found to actually do it. My experience at West Yorkshire was not untypical, where on arrival in 1966 Leeds depot (with 90 buses) had no single manning: Bradford ran a similar number of buses, of which two were single-manned.

Fare increases and union relations

By this time the industry was in a cycle of annual fare increases. These had to be approved by Traffic Commissioners, who understood the issue and, when fare increase applications were being considered, asked about progress with single-manning as a means of reducing costs and so minimising fare increases. The trade unions also understood what was going on and were adept at saying to management "If you want an increase in single-manning, we want 1, 2 and 3". The NCOI agreement had a clause saying that conversion to OMO should not be unreasonably refused, but the trade unions found reasons not to progress. The unions were also fully aware of prevailing shortages and would argue that the problem was low basic rates which management was reluctant to increase. A culture of overtime developed which management valued to a degree for the flexibility it gave, but it had the effect of increasing actual average wage costs. In some cases shortages reached the point where scheduled mileage could not be covered.

At this point I should emphasise that the industry has always had a majority of very good staff: the problem is at the margin, but that margin can be a large one. During this period, bus work gradually became a fall-back / last resort occupation. Difficulty in recruitment and retention meant that standards were lowered and unreliable, scruffy or rude staff were employed who brought down quality standards; they were also a cause of concern to long-serving staff anxious to do the job properly. My previous article in the Journal mentions shortages at Ilkley; it should be acknowledged that this was an unusual situation resulting from takeover of the Samuel Ledgard business. Some routes were offered to Leeds City Transport, and staff were given the option of transferring to them, where higher municipal NJIC rates applied: others left the industry entirely. In 1966 West Yorkshire could generally obtain enough staff, though not all were of the desired quality. York in particular, our largest depot, had problems of high turnover and poor quality staff.

Government intervenes

Shortage problems led to threats to secede from the

municipal NJIC, in locations including Birmingham and Coventry. There was a good deal of local unrest, including a strike at East Yorkshire Motor Services in 1966, seeking parity with Hull Corporation NJIC rates on common routes in Hull; this was ignored by the NCOI and EYMS's parent BET, probably being seen as the thin end of very large wedge with Birmingham, Manchester and others in mind. The 1964 Harold Wilson (Labour) Government had created a National Board for Prices and Incomes (NBPI), which was asked to carry out studies into the industry; however, its recommendations could only be within the framework of the Government's incomes policy where "productivity" was the key word, and increases could only be agreed where resourced by greater efficiency.

The NBPI reports led to a thawing of opposition to conversion from 1968 onwards, and a series of agreements which brought a general move towards more single-manning. Part of this was through "consolidation", simplifying wage systems by incorporating, e.g. Sunday premiums into the basic rate. "Acceptance bonuses" were given to staff remaining on dual-crew work, while OMO differentials were increased and varied between single/double deck work and also between urban and rural areas. However, this in itself brought back complexity into the wage structure and threw up anomalies. The definition of "urban" and "rural" was based on local authority populations; Bradford was rightly recognised as an urban area qualifying for the higher rate, but its neighbour Shipley had an Urban District Council with a smaller population which was deemed rural despite being part of the Bradford conurbation. The savings from greater productivity were to be shared between management and staff.

Single-manning was further encouraged by Barbara Castle's 1968 Transport Act, which introduced a New Bus Grant. The Grant was designed to encourage the purchase of rear-engined vehicles suitable for single manning, and laid down vehicle specifications which, among other things, brought about an end to the manufacture of bonneted double-deckers. Another outcome from the extension of single-manning was greater interest by operators in simplified fares and fare collection systems which would help drivers in collecting fares on busier routes with larger vehicles.

The move to Thames Valley at Maidenhead

This I found culturally completely different and a new scenario. Geographically, we were six miles from the edge of the London Transport Board (LTB) area at Slough and Windsor, and little over ten miles from Heathrow. The territorial boundary between LTB and ourselves was somewhat blurred, with most of our routes running over common roads with LTB. This included the red 81 from Hounslow, though most were

green Country services, about to be transferred to National Bus but at the time still part of LTB. Two routes were jointly operated, with alternate journeys run by TV and LTB. In industrial relations terms, while at West Yorkshire management and the trade union had their moments, there existed a generally cosy relationship which management did not want spoilt by greenhorn trainees, and on reflection I felt an otherwise good training scheme had the weakness that I was sheltered from the formalities of industrial relations. At Thames Valley I found a Branch Secretary and Chairman telling me they had this at National Agreement and that at Local Agreement, which I knew nothing about.

On my arrival a dispute was in progress with no overtime being worked and no buses on Saturdays. Overtime was normally considerable because the scheduled working week was 54 hrs, comprised of 6 days of 8 hours plus 2 pieces of overtime, mainly covering schools. The afternoon overtime generally worked because crews stayed on after an early turn; the morning overtime was a major problem because, to comply with drivers' hours regulations, drivers had to work a middle turn the previous day, then come in for morning overtime, go home and return for a late shift, which led to a high failure rate on morning overtime. The same basic rate applied as with other NCOI member companies, the only exception being for canteen staff for whom the NCOI rate was 5s 6d per hour. Canteen staff could not be found to work for this, and at Maidenhead we were allowed to pay 6s 6d. We had a couple of conductresses who were willing to work in the canteen when it was short of staff; this would normally mean their buses being off the road for the duration, but if the canteen closed work would stop and there would be no buses running. It was preferable to have two or three buses off the road than all of them.

The dispute was in support of a claim for "parity" with LTB crews at Windsor, who enjoyed a basic rate 25% higher than ours. Maidenhead was not a good location for recruitment of bus crews (or for other service jobs with unsocial hours, such as postmen and milkmen), and most staff were recruited in Slough, where many LTB Windsor staff also lived. So the question arose why bus staff should choose to work for us? One answer was that a maximum limit on overtime existed at LTB; we had no such limitation, crews often working in excess of the scheduled 54 hours, so the potential maximum earnings were not so different. Additionally bureaucracy ruled at LTB, where everything had to go through Chiswick and the recruitment process could be slow; Thames Valley by contrast had the virtue of being very decentralised, with all recruitment and training carried out at depot level.

The dispute extended to a refusal to accept any change in schedules. "Productivity" was still the touchstone

and TV staff had not accepted the consolidation agreement. The trade union argued that if management wanted a change in schedules it must be to increase productivity - why else would management want it? The TGWU had not agreed an increase in productivity and until they did, nothing would change.

Shortages of conductors and drivers were endemic. Shortly after my arrival I was asked to complete statistics on staff turnover for the Road Transport Industry Training Board; this I initially saw as a nuisance and an unnecessary distraction, but the results made me realise how great the problem was. Our conductor establishment was around 100, and over the previous two years 200 had left, so the typical turnover was 100%. Few of those engaged stayed longer than six months. It was evident that the problem was not so much recruitment as retention, so there must be something about the job that staff found out after joining. This was probably connected with shift patterns and their effect on family life, but in the absence of exit interviews I could not be certain.

The scale of the problem had led to creation of a staff hostel, for single men, and recruitment tours in Scotland, Wales and other places. Additionally a bush telegraph existed which led to potential employees arriving from Scotland in particular, who were often good but if family men, left quickly when they realised the housing situation locally. I engaged one driver who had previously worked for a Scottish company - eight times, in between spells at the British Leyland tractor factory at Bathgate. His preference was clearly to work there, but when tractor sales slipped and redundancies were declared he would "fill in" at the bus company. This clearly demonstrated the "fallback" perception of bus work existing at the time.

The Thames Valley agreement

By this time not only Thames Valley was experiencing serious staffing problems; Bristol, Eastern National and Midland Red were all, like us, seeking greater flexibility in wage bargaining, and this time senior management had to listen. Midland Red, the Scottish Group and others responded to shortages by making the working week Monday - Friday, relying on voluntary overtime and part-timers for weekends. This was intended to ensure reliability through the working week, and a standard working week for staff, but was a high risk strategy and a recipe for ulcers among supervisory staff.

For Thames Valley the job fell to D.S. Deacon, my mentor as a trainee but at the time Chairman of the southern group of Tilling companies, to find a formula for a bonus scheme that would be acceptable to staff but also to our political masters, state-owned companies being under particular scrutiny. Agreement was reached based on payment per mile over common

routes in the Slough area; this maximised the incentive to tighten schedules, but was also a "reward" for dual crews remaining on these busier routes while single-manning was implemented on quieter routes to the west. The benefits from the consolidation agreement, including "acceptance money" paid to everyone, were implemented simultaneously so that drivers switching to OMO would also gain - including the larger differentials and sharing of productivity gains. The first single-manned double-deckers were introduced at Maidenhead just before I left in August 1970 (and by this time there were some female drivers - another change previously resisted by the trade union).

In the short term at least the agreement brought major benefit and an increase in reliability. The formation of National Bus from the Tilling and BET groups led to a merger between TV and its BET neighbour Aldershot & District as the never very happy Alder Valley company. Aldershot had its own staffing problems arising mainly from the high percentage of property around Aldershot that was owned by the Army.

National bargaining post-1968

The 1968 Act also set up Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs), which adopted their own agreements in major cities at the expense of the municipal NJIC. NBC companies within PTE areas tended to conform to PTE wage structures, and in Manchester and West Midlands were sold to the local PTE. The NCOI was clearly weakened by company-based bonus schemes, but I understand continued to determine basic rates for NBC and the Scottish Bus Group until the early 1980s. The industry progressed towards almost total single-manning by the early-mid 1980s (outside London), so there was no further opportunity to increase productivity from that source. Also, once conductors had been eliminated, companies lost the facility to recruit conductors and later train them as drivers.

1985 Transport Act: deregulation and privatisation

After deregulation in October 1986, it was now for individual companies and the emerging groups to form wage agreements based on profitability and local labour markets; one reaction to deregulation was to maximise productivity by removing existing local agreements, in order to be able to maintain or increase earnings. Agreements would certainly not extend outside individual companies and differential rates within depots were implemented in some cases. "Low-cost units", based partly on lower wages for drivers, appeared in some places, often for competitive reasons, but were not always successful, partly because drivers did not like being poor relations and voted with their feet.

Theoretically a free market now exists where wages are fixed at an ideal level which secures a full labour force while achieving a profit to satisfy shareholders; if only it were that simple! Shortages have continued to arise at a higher or lower level dependent on the state of the national and local economy, with local property prices becoming increasingly important. In my own area, at the time of the 2008 recession I was told by Stagecoach management that driver turnover had simply stopped; but it was noticeable at my local Go North East depot that the "drivers wanted" poster outside never came down.

Conclusions

1. Problems of staff shortage have certainly not been solved by the ending of national wage bargaining and rigid pay scales, although the problems are almost certainly lessened.
2. There has been a culture of low basic rates and available overtime, which has driven up actual average wage costs. I sometimes wondered at TV if a major improvement in basic rates might attract sufficient staff, and of higher quality, to reduce overtime, improve reliability and be self-financing. The trade press has reported recently that this is being tried by First Group at Bristol, partly to eliminate extensive use of agency drivers. The Bristol exercise was reported as not yet at breakeven point but working towards it; Reading has been reported to be taking similar action. The trade press carries occasional reports of action to stabilise workforces but with little longer-term follow-up!
3. East European drivers are the latest palliative, to follow recruitment from Barbados and elsewhere. Some of the major group companies have tried this through agencies, but it appears with little long-term effect (although such employment at the margin can of course bring major overall benefit). At least two smaller operators, in Manchester and South Wales, were entirely dependent on Lithuanian or Polish drivers, this becoming public knowledge because both had their Operators' Licences revoked by their regional Traffic Commissioner following operating irregularities. The trade press also recently reported two operators having been convicted for paying below the minimum wage; it was not suggested that the staff involved were East European, although it is surprising that any driver would be willing, or find it necessary, to accept work at that level. The fact that unlawfully low payments were made does indicate the culture existing in some parts of the industry.
4. It was suggested earlier that there are four possible sources of recruitment / retention problems: (a) shift patterns (b) handling the public (c) financial rewards and (d) the social status of the driver. We are entitled to ask if the driver's status has changed, or is it still the

fallback occupation? There have been two developments of interest in recent years:

(a) 'Vetting and Barring' requirements, perhaps better known by the previous name of Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks. Most drivers must have clearance under the Vetting and Barring regulations to be able to work on local authority contracts. The regulations were not intended in any way as professionalisation or to improve the status of employees, although it is fair to say they were generally welcomed by employers as a source of information which might otherwise be concealed. From the driver's point of view, clearance does enable an additional box to be ticked on CVs and application forms.

(b) Continuing Professional Development in the form of a Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) for drivers, introduced under an EU Directive. John A Smith, a former NBC manager who implemented the CPC programme for the industry training body GoSkills, told sometimes suspicious operators that his objective was to end the driver's perception of the job that, when asked what he/she did for a living, the answer would typically be "I'm just a driver".

Three possible reactions by employers when faced with the requirement to implement the CPC might be summarised as:

(i) To embrace it as an opportunity to improve driver status and operational quality. Some operators have taken professionalisation further and offered drivers the opportunity to work towards National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), perhaps using the CPC ongoing requirement as a base.

(ii) To see it as a complete waste of time and money; it is instructive that some operators make their drivers undertake (compulsory) CPC training in their own time and at their own expense.

(iii) To accept the CPC provided particular objectives are achieved; these might typically be a reduction in accidents and fuel consumption.

With the CPC now fully implemented, it may be questioned whether the aspiration of ending the "I'm just a driver" perception has been achieved. While those familiar with the industry know that the driver's job involves training, qualifications and skills, this is not generally recognised, and it is still publicly perceived at best as a semi-skilled job. This is despite some of the major groups developing marketing programmes which include extra training in customer care alongside improved vehicles and information. It is probably also fair comment that most have succeeded in improving standards in uniform and appearance from those prevailing fifty years ago.

And a final thought. One of the alleged benefits of a UK exit from the EU is that we would have the ability to terminate regulations wished on us by EU membership; these include the Driver CPC. Were the impending referendum to lead to a decision to leave the EU, it would be interesting to see which areas of regulation the bus industry prioritised for removal and whether these would include the one action designed to professionalise the industry.

List of Members' Interests

You will find enclosed with this journal an insert of four pages listing those members who have agreed to be included together with their particular interests. The

list is provided for your own personal use to assist you in contacting others with similar interests and not for distribution to others. We do hope you will find this list interesting and helpful. The list will remain in force for one year, when it will be revised.

The Journal of the Roads and Road Transport History Association is produced with the support of The University of Wales Trinity St Davids. The membership is extremely grateful for this support.

Viewpoints and opinions expressed by contributors to this Journal should be seen as personal, and do not necessarily reflect views of the Association.

The next issue is no 85, August 2016. Copy date is Tuesday 5 July. Contributions should be sent to the editor at the address shown on page 2.

Roads & Road Transport History Association

Wales on Wheels 2016

The fourth Wales on Wheels 2016 is held on Saturday 14 May, 10 – 4. As before it will be held in and around the National Waterfront Museum and Dylan Thomas Square in Swansea Marina.

The event is a joint effort by the Roads & Road Transport History Association, National Waterfront Museum, Swansea Museum, and Swansea Bus Museum. Participation and entry is free.

- Swansea Bus Museum – ride a double-decker from the Museum to Mumbles!
- Ryland Classics
- Swansea Museum truck and bus
- Barry Bus Museum
- Classic Vehicle Enthusiasts Group
- Yeoman Living History - <http://www.yeomangreatwar.com>
- Swansea Motorcycle Club
- Skewen and Pontarddulais Classic Car Clubs
- Swansea Historic Vehicle Register
- Welsh Area Fire Engine Restoration Society
- Swansea Fire Service
- Pink Cadillac
- University of Wales Trinity St David's School of Applied Design (modern racing cars)
- Wheelrights
- Bikeability
- Tools for Self Reliance
- Wallace and Gromit van and motorcycle with sidecar
- Mametz Woods Classic Car Run 2016
- Sinclair C5 with pedals for kids
- Penyarden Steam Locomotive accompanied by Mr Trevithick himself - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZCfXIZGFhc>
- Gilbern Club
- Swansea Railway Modellers Group
- Bryngold Books
- Oxfam transport book sale
- Oxford Diecast

See the photos at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/96706702@N06/>

There will be a dinner for Association members and WoW participants at the Swansea Marriott on Friday 13th May. The speaker is Philip Kirk, former Managing Director of Oxford Bus Company and now Archivist of the Kithead Trust.

Contact John Ashley to book a vehicle or the dinner at 6 Cefn Glas, Tychoch, Swansea, SA2 9GW
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