The Roads and Road Transport History Association

Contents

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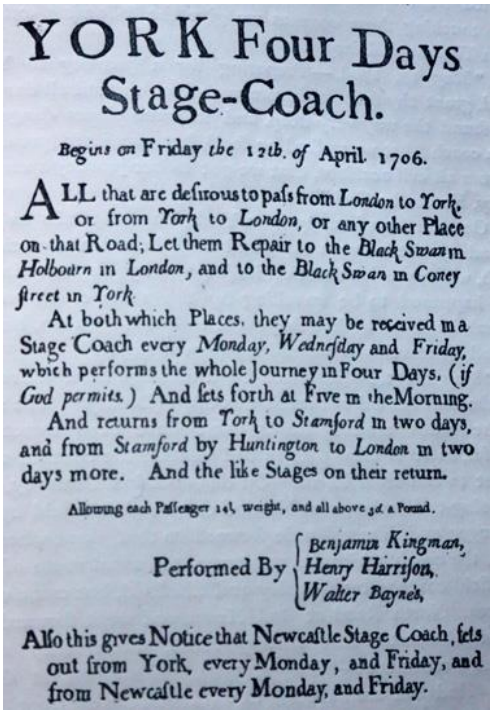
The Evolution of Road Passenger Transport Heritage Branding

Martin Higginson

This paper is based on presentations by the author at a York University Business History Workshop on 16 September 2016 and at the R&RTHA Coventry meeting on 29 October2016

Since the earliest days, transport operators have sought to distinguish their offerings from those of other providers. At its most local level, the operator would be known personally to his customers: Farmer Giles' cart taking local passengers to the market along with his own produce or livestock. Today, some customers may prefer their local taxi firm, whose drivers they know by name and trust. Traditionally, country bus drivers and their regular passengers know one another.

When passenger transport operations become more removed from the communities they serve and more impersonal, for example inter-town services, alternative means of attracting custom become necessary. This is where marketing and branding begin. Some of the first examples were stagecoaches: fast, publicly available services benefiting from turnpikes and other road improvements. Departures were from inns, whose names were advertised in press announcements detailing routes, times and fares. Services were identified either by destination ('York Four Days Stage-Coach' from the Black Swan, Holborn, London) or, where competing services dictated product differentiation, by name. Stirring names were often selected, such as Sovereign, Tally Ho!, or Enterprise.



YORK Four Days Stage-Coach.

Begins on Friday the 12th. of April. 1706.

ALL that are desirous to pass from London to York, or from York to London, or any other Place on that Road; Let them Repair to the Black Swan in Holbourn in London, and to the Black Swan in Coney street in York.

At both which Places, they may be received in a Stage Coach every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, which performs the whole Journey in Four Days, (if God permits.) And sets forth at Five in the Morning.

And returns from York to Stamford in two days, and from Stamford by Huntington to London in two days more. And the like Stages on their return.

Allowing each Passenger 14 l. weight, and all above 3d. a Pound.

Performed By { Benjamin Kingman, Henry Harrison, Walter Bayne's.

Also this gives Notice that Newcastle Stage Coach, sets out from York, every Monday, and Friday, and from Newcastle every Monday, and Friday.

York Four Days Stagecoach advertisement, 1706

Source: Tom Bradley, The Old Coaching Days in Yorkshire, Yorkshire Conservative Newspaper Co ("The Yorkshire Post"), Leeds, 1889, which also contains a 28-page alphabetical list of coach services in the area, from 'Accommodation' to 'Yorkshire Huzzar'.

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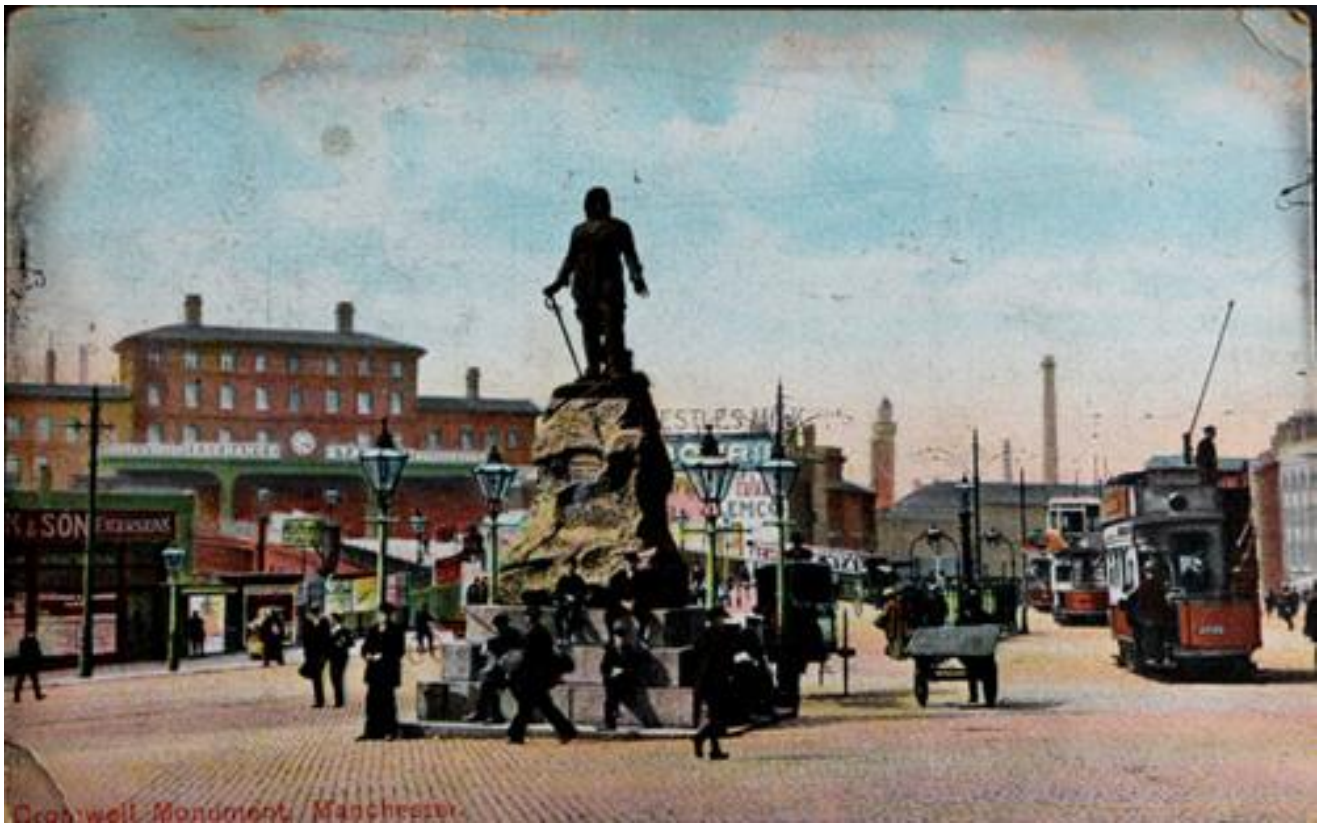
There might be several coaches on the same route, so names evolved into brands. In urban operation, where many buses would be needed to run a route, some form of specific identity was needed. Route numbers, or occasionally letters, supplementing the destination name, became the norm. When different operators plied in an area, sometimes competing with one another, stronger identities might be required, to reassure customers and to entice them to use a particular company's services. Among private operators, the practice of stagecoach operators was adopted in naming their businesses. In many cases, colour and livery became the brand image. The companies benefited by attracting a loyal clientele; and the travelling public by knowing what services were on offer. A recognised name gave an expectation of quality and reliability, as evidenced by the titles of two long-standing York operators, Reliance and York Pullman.

Municipal undertakings generally adopted the town or city name, capitalising on municipal pride, bus and tram operations generally being the authorities' highest profile trading activities. Their near-monopoly position made company-specific marketing unnecessary; the very presence of the vehicles was sufficiently dominant, as exemplified by the postcard view of Manchester in the early 20th century.

Titles often changed to reflect evolving circumstances; for example from Plymouth Corporation Tramways (subsequently also Plymouth Corporation Buses) became Plymouth Corporation Transport and then, following city designation in 1928, City of Plymouth Transport. Regional names fulfilled a similar purpose as smaller firms evolved into oligopolistic area-wide concerns, largely in the 1920s and '30s, such as Western National, Cumberland Motor Services and Eastern Counties. Some companies in the Tilling Group were given 'National' titles: Eastern National, Southern National, etc., arising from its acquisition of the National Omnibus & Transport Company in 1931. This was perpetuated and extended in a rather different form (such as 'National Welsh') under the auspices of the National Bus Company in the 1970s. The Tilling Group and subsequently NBC also developed corporate liveries; a common house style and font for subsidiaries' trading names at Tilling and standard liveries of poppy red, light green (and initially also a light blue option) for NBC's buses. NBC coaches adopted the white 'National Express' house style, which has become one of the industry's longest-lasting brands, still in use after almost after almost fifty years.

(above) York Pullman heritage bus and current coach liveries, York, 2016 Photo: Martin Higginson

(below) Manchester Corporation trams passing Cromwell Monument, Manchester Exchange Station



Family and personal names commonly survived on local undertakings, for example Samuel Ledgard in Bradford, Sanders in Norfolk, the Scottish bus and ferry operator MacBraynes and Stevenson's of Uttoxeter, of which all but Sanders have been subsumed within other undertakings. Personal names were less common with major conglomerates, one of the few examples being the Alexander group of companies in Scotland.

Colour names remained a common brand identifier. Some dated from the stagecoach era (e.g. Red Rover, True Blue: Bradley, *op cit*). Later examples include Midland Red, Primrose Motors of Leominster, Stratford Blue, Chocolate Express, Purple Motor Services, the post-deregulation Norfolk Green, the long-distance coach operator Royal Blue, trading in southern and south-western England, Red & White on the Anglo-Welsh borderlands and Cheltenham-based coach operator Black & White Motorways. Sometimes colour and personal names were used together, such as the London coach and latterly also bus operator George Ewer/Grey Green, which metamorphosed into Arriva in 1998 (Owen Woodliffe, *From Ewer to Arriva*, Author, 2001). Arriva is a rare example in the bus industry of the use of a 'made-up' name, a feature common in other industries: Accenture, AXA, Zoopla, etc.

Motor Services had separate liveries for buses (crimson), dual-purpose vehicles at home on either express or stage carriage work (crimson with cream) and coaches (cream with a little crimson). Many other bus undertakings had separate identities for coaching divisions, such as Western Scottish.

Some companies adopted route-specific liveries, a concept considered by Ian Souter with regard to tramways (Ian Souter, Branding by Numbers: Route Branding in the Tramway Years, R&RTHA Journal No.83, February 2016). The wider adoption of route branding dates largely from bus deregulation and privatisation, the erstwhile National Bus Company introducing specially branded minibus networks in many places ahead of these changes, in order to protect its market and improve profitability. For the public, at least as important as the new brands was the return to

East Yorkshire Motor Services' heritage-branded X4 Wicstun Express, depicting a stylised Viking helmet. 'Wicstun' is the name in the Domesday Book for the present-day Market Weighton

Photo Martin Higginson

Some of the larger bus businesses have a tradition of differently identifying sub-sectors within their organisations, among the best known being London Transport's red Central, green Country and Green Line-branded longer distance inter-urban services. Ribble

high frequencies (lost in places such as Exeter under previous rationalisations, often as part of NBC's Market Analysis Project (MAP)), lower fares and a friendlier image. Although the 16-seat vehicles used initially soon proved too small, the concept of branded services at walk-on frequencies in urban areas has lasted. NBC examples from the initial, pre-deregulation period include the pioneering Exeter Mini network (1984), Midland Red West's Worcester Citibus (1985) and Alder Valley South's Whippet, which re-introduced the former Aldershot & District green and cream livery

(John Birks et al, *National Bus Company 1968-1989*, Transport Publishing Co, Glossop, 1990: mainly Chapter 10).

Transdev's service 500, Keighley – Haworth – Hebden Bridge is branded to reflect the literary heritage of Haworth, home of the Bronte sisters. Photographed waiting outside the Haworth Old Hall Inn on 15 November 2015
Photo: Martin Higginson

Since 1986, the practice of separate route brands and liveries has become widespread, route names typically alluding to some local feature, with the new image commonly being associated with a move away from standard mileage-related fare structures. For many years different ownership groups had contrasting branding policies. Stagecoach, First and Arriva each opted for single group identities: the familiar red, orange and blue banded Stagecoach, turquoise Arriva and grey, purple and pink so-called 'barbie' style of First, although all three have subsequently introduced localised variants, often associated with high quality services such as Stagecoach Gold and Arriva Sapphire. Go Ahead, Transdev and TrentBarton preferred separate local identities and pioneered the introduction of individual route-based styles that are now rapidly spreading to the other groups and municipal undertakings. Go North East has 36 route brands, many with local heritage and even dialect influences. Some have obvious geographical meanings (Coaster, Quaylink, Tyne Tees Express, Blaydon Racer), while others make more obscure, often historical references (Prince Bishops, The Waggonway, The Crusader). Some of the most 'fun' are the local and dialect names such as Whey Aye Five-O, Toonlink and See it Do it Sunderland.

Livery styles tend to be modern, with relatively few overtly historical in appearance. Examples of the latter include East Yorkshire's Wicstun Express, featuring a stylised Viking helmet, and York Pullman, which perpetuates updated versions of its 1920s purple, yellow and cream livery. Many bus companies have temporarily painted vehicles in facsimiles of earlier liveries to commemorate significant anniversaries and heritage is sometimes also celebrated by operating old vehicles in service on special occasions. No evidence has been found of companies explicitly evaluating the costs and benefits of heritage branding, although undertakings such as Harrogate & District (operators of the pioneering leather-seated Leeds-Ripon '36'), Reading Buses, Transdev in Lancashire and Yorkshire (MainLine, Coastliner, Tadfaster – serving Tadcaster - and City Zap – a clear example of contemporary rather than heritage branding) and City of Nottingham brand services as part of overall packages of enhancements designed to attract more passengers.

A 2012 study (Graham Hill, *Route branding versus corporate livery: A comparative study of effectiveness in bus service marketing: The case of Veolia Transdev*, MSc Transport & Business Management dissertation, Newcastle University) identified how branding was viewed by passengers and what they look for in services.

Table 1	**How passengers identify their bus**
Operator name	
Route name	
Route number	
Vehicle type: DD, SD, mini, etc	
Stop it leaves from	
Destination shown on indicator	
Time	

….continued on next page

Table 2 Features passengers selected in order of importance
1 Friendly, helpful driver
2 Improved timetables
3 Special fare deals interior
4 Vehicle colour
5 High quality vehicle
6 New buses
7 Give service its own special colours
8 Give service its own special name

Even using Hill's statistical approach it is difficult to quantify the precise benefits or beneficiaries – passengers or company businesses – from individual elements of branding. Rather, the gains evolve from overall packages: nice buses, polite and helpful drivers, punctual operations, clear information, attractive routes and schedules, etc. It is all about creating a feel-good factor, in order to retain existing users and to attract new ones, as exemplified by the Brighton slogan "Be seen on the Bus".

A further factor is localism, a successor to 'municipal pride'. It is no coincidence that locally owned and run companies consistently punch above their weight in Bus Industry Awards. The names Reading, Nottingham and TrentBarton keep cropping up. Only slightly tongue in cheek, Alex Warner describes the Bus Industry Awards as "a three-course meal, while toasting another victory or two for Reading Buses" (Passenger Transport, issue 149, 9 December 2016, 19). Local managerial presence is clearly an important element in successful bus operations. London saw reversion to an updated version of the iconic Routemaster, decidedly retro in design and now deemed too expensive to be perpetuated. This is a further example of heritage branding, albeit a controversial one. The bendi-buses whose role it usurped had many advantages, such as rapid boarding and alighting and vast capacity, but suffered from having no London (or indeed British) heritage and the media and politicians failed to come to terms with them.

What does the future hold for heritage branding? It is clearly popular in some quarters, but do passengers really care about it? Is all they want a good, cheap and reliable bus service, of any colour and run by whatever operator is to hand? So long as fares are reasonable and tickets interchangeable. A further benefit of branding may be to staff and company morale, which in turn leads to the operation of good services. From a 2017 perspective, heritage branding seems a beneficial institution, whose presence we can expect to see retained and expanded.

Below: Best of both: combined Arriva North East and United liveries to commemorate United Automobile centenary in 2012. Photo source http://northeastbusnews.wordpress.com courtesy Amy Graham.

Guidance for contributors

The editor has produced a guidance note for future contributions, regarding style, format and overall approach of the Journal. Copies are available from him by e-mail, whether you are already a member of the Association considering a contribution, or know of someone who may be interested in doing so.

Letter to the Editor

READING THE RUNES

Some matters arising on bus/tram/train competition from Reg Davies' article on The Southern Railway and its response to bus competition which featured in Journal no 86:

The 'Brighton Line' had been seriously interested in suburban electrification since 1900 when all tram and bus competition used horse traction. London County Council electrified its tramways in the Peckham area in January 1904, Thomas Tilling's pioneer motorbus route from Peckham to Oxford Circus starting in September of that year. The Brighton Line's South London route was their first to be electrified (1909) and comprised a circuitous loop between London Bridge and Victoria via Peckham. Barker & Robbins in 'A History of London Transport Vol 2' noted that by 1909 this line had lost half of the 8 million passengers it had carried in 1902. Much of this loss was recovered within months, encouraging subsequent electrification of the Brighton Line routes to Crystal Palace via West Norwood from both London Bridge and Victoria. These extensions were opened in 1911 and 1912 and spanned a gap in the tramway map between LCC tramways at West Norwood and those of the Croydon area at Crystal Palace, a gap which was never filled. After the Great War, the Brighton Line's electrified network was extended to the south of the Croydon tramway network in 1925. Note that in 1910 the South London line was one of the few London suburban lines operated by a main line railway to provide a basic interval (30 minute in this case) all day service; most suburban rail services were irregular and less frequent.

Bearing in mind that public transport provision in the metropolis was much more exposed to competition between modes of travel and between operators than anywhere else in the country, a question arising is what was the effect on LCC Tramways of the reinvigorated railway competitor. In respect of passenger numbers, from the annual Board of Trade returns on tramways, the answer in the short term seems to have been 'not a lot'; from 1903, LCC Tramways' passenger numbers increased every year until 1912, generally at a rate in double figures. Using Munby's "Inland Transport Statistics" and taking the data presented at face value for London's public transport, rough comparisons can be made between the rates of growth in passenger numbers by tramways, motorbuses and local railways. However, the most serious flaw in this approach is Munby's lack of data from the suburban services of nine of the ten main line railway companies with suburban services in London. Proceeding regardless, the following trends emerge:

Table 1: Comparison of passengers carried by mode and their contributions, 1911 and 1930.

Year	All Modes	All Bus	LGOC etc	All Tram	LCC Tram	Local Rail
1911	1659 m (100%)	400 m (24%)	340 m (21%)	822 m (50%)	504 m (30%)	437 m (26%)
1930	3710 m (100%)	1961 m (53%)	1697 m (46%)	264 m (29%)	722 m (19%)	662 m (18%)

Notes to Table 1:

m = millions

LGOC, etc = London General Omnibus Company and its associated bus operators

LGOC, etc and LCC Tram are subsets of All Bus and All Tram respectively

1911 was the start of LGOC's launch of a new motorbus fleet (the "B" type)

1930 was the peak year for passengers by All Modes, All LGOC, etc Buses and All Trams

Other significant peak years for passengers carried were:

1920 - Local Rail Passengers (1068 million)

1923 – LCC Tramways (733 million)

1927 – Independent Buses (378 million)

1930 – All Buses (1962 million)

cont/…

Table 2: Percentage Changes per Period in Passengers Carried for Main Transport Modes						
Period	**All Modes**	**All Bus**	**All LGOC etc**	**All Tram**	**LCC Tram**	**Local Rail**
1911-1913	+20%	+83%	+85%	-1%	1%	+1%
1914-1918	+16%	-7%	+3%	+22%	15%	+46%
1919-1923	+22%	+82%	+86%	+4%	23%	-12%
1924-1930	+30%	+57%	+39%	+5%	-1%	+16%
1931-1933	-4%	-2%	-5%	-4%	-6%	-7%

Source for both Tables: Munby's Inland Transport Statistics Tables C6.3 and C6.4

What must also be taken into account in pondering these trends are changes in levels of population. In the twentieth century until 1931 there was a 24% growth in population of "Greater London", "Inner London" (London County) losing 3% over the same period. The effects of the Great War and its aftermath are also apparent and it is suggested that the 1931-1933 downturn in every mode is a reflection of the difficulties faced by the national economy at the time. As ever, transport provision does not work in a vacuum.

The question posed at the start of this little study was what effect did an early railway electrification have on LCC Tramways. The immediate answer was 'not a lot' and, in a case of history repeating itself, Table 2 shows that by 1930 the answer to the same question was the same. This was despite the Southern Railway's major electrification programme started in 1925 and electrification of the North London line in 1916. It is also interesting to note that in 1930, at the peak of the passengers carried on London's urban public transport pre the formation of London Transport, the different transport modes were all at or very near their respective peaks of passengers carried. The impression is given that there was scope for all transport modes to justify their existence in society as passenger carriers at that time. Such a 'win-win' was/is not confined to London.

Ian Souter

Additional comment from the editor:

It is of interest to note that recent statistics are not greatly removed from those of 1930, DfT's statistical tables for 2015-16 showing 2293m bus trips, 1349m underground trips, plus 117m for Docklands Light Railway and 27m for Tramlink. Ironically, ambiguities for surface rail travel still remain. However TfL's 'Travel in London' report no 8 shows about 140m passenger journey stages on London Overground in 2014-15 (page 54). The Office of Road & Rail report 'Regional Rail usage 2014-15' (Annual Statistical Release, January 2016) gives an annual trip total for franchised operators within London of 492m. The grand total of 3926m (including Overground, but excluding National Rail) is somewhat higher than in 1930, in part explained by higher population, but it is of course noteworthy that car ownership is vastly greater than at that time. It should be noted that there is an element of double-counting both in the historic and more recent figures, whether due to bus-bus interchange or that between separate modes.

Obituary

David Dodd 1938-2016

We record with regret the death of David Dodd, a long-standing member of this Association. He had an eye for historical detail of the kind that might be overlooked by others and to which he would delight in drawing attention, whether in timetables, tickets or in other evidence of the existence of a bus service, yet remained a keen observer of the contemporary scene. He was a keen traveller in pursuit of his interests, especially since the untimely death of his wife Lesley in 2003 and in spite of recent health issues. He was a member of several societies, in particular the Transport Ticket Society and the Omnibus Society, which he joined in 1955 and with which he served as the North Western & Yorkshire Branch Hon Secretary in the 1960s. **Ken Swallow**

Roads and Road Transport History Association Autumn Conference 2016

The R&RTHA Autumn Conference took place, as it generally does, at the Coventry Transport Museum, this time on Saturday the 29th of October 2016. There was no specific theme for the day; however, much of what the speakers had to tell us dealt with the importance of looking back in order to move forwards, and how the past can help us predict events yet to come.

The day's first, and principal, speaker was Roger Torode, who presented information from and about his recent book on *Privatising London's Buses* (reviewed in our May 2016 issue). Roger had enough information in his presentation to fuel a whole day of talks; indeed I would have liked to hear more on each topic, on separate occasions. Roger grew up in the West Midlands and his first job was with Midland Red. He subsequently moved to London and a thirty-year career with London Transport/Transport for London. His interest in Midland Red and its publicity material led to the book Midland Red Style which he produced with Malcolm Keeley, following which he was asked to author this latest work, which he wrote with the aim of producing an unbiased view compiled from the stories of all those involved in the privatisation process.

Tendering of London's bus services brought a rainbow of colours where there had been only red. Church Street in Enfield always had green country buses as well as the red ones, but in July 1987 has a Leyland Olympian of London Country North East on the 313 to Chingford, followed by Sampson's former London Transport Daimler Fleetline on its way to Upshire, and a Leaside Routemaster setting off for Tottenham Court Road. While this illustrates the challenge that competitive tendering presented to London Buses, both LCNE and Sampson's withdrew from their contracts early following poor performance, while Leaside kept the majority of its network due to competitive pricing and the quality of its operation. (Keith Wood)

Roger interviewed around 80 individuals from all levels of involvement in the privatisation process: politicians, directors, managers, and drivers, amongst others. He used original reports from meetings, press articles, and the published memoirs of those who oversaw the changes. The book covers over thirty years of changes, and a one hour talk was never going to do justice to its contents – or indeed to the work that went into writing it. I would have enjoyed hearing more about the latter, since other people's writing and research processes always fascinate me. As it was we were overwhelmed by a great deal of very interesting information in a talk that significantly exceeded its slot on the programme, and consequently quite probably missed out on hearing some of the interesting information that ought to have come at the end of the talk.

Above: The successful management buy-out team (including the four directors) celebrating purchase of the Metroline operation in 1994, on an open-topper at Harrow Bus Station (Gordon Tennant). Today this operation is a subsidiary of Comfort Delgro of Singapore

On the other hand, I did learn that the mammoth endeavour that was the attempt at privatising transport within Greater London went through a myriad of phases, as political power shifted between individuals and from one major party to another, and attempts were made to alternately ensure consistency and encourage diversity in the buses provided. At the end we were left to ponder whether deregulation might have been the outcome for London and if privatisation of the transport system had been entirely necessary, as well as what the future might have in store for transport in the capital, never mind the problems faced by the regions.

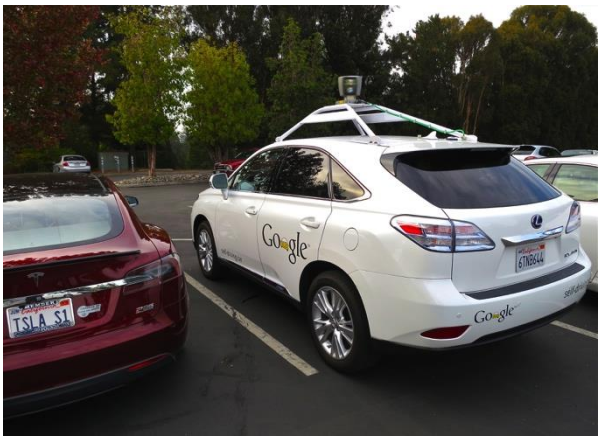
Looking forwards was the main theme of Rod Ashley's presentation, *A Nostalgic View of the Future of Motoring*. A leading light of the Institute of Advanced Motorists, Rod has many publishing credits to his name; for this presentation he was keen to celebrate the successes of motoring history over the past century-and-a-bit as

well as looking ahead to exciting developments we may witness in decades to come. Ongoing progress in the automotive industry has given us technological invention and endeavour, with a wide variety of design concepts which have sometimes stood the test of time – although others have fallen by the wayside. Meanwhile, the growth of private motoring, and the general improvements to road transport that have accompanied it, have had a tremendous social impact, opening up new opportunities in the lives of many people and fostering a spirit of adventure and discovery in yet others. The improved affordability of both private and public transport has opened up new horizons and led in part to a much greater shared economy.

Above: The possibly romanticised view of the new vista opened up in early motoring: an open tourer across a glacier road. [Source: Glacier National Park, Montana, USA. Early travellers, 1930s. US National Park Service.]

All these social improvements may have led to many of us having a nostalgic view of motoring in previous eras, but we should not forget the problems of early motoring that have been overcome as technologies have improved. Improvements, of course, are happening at an ever increasing pace: many in the motor industry believe that a graduate's knowledge base may now become outdated in as little as five years. Quite often these developments are driven by motorsport – principally Formula One, but increasingly also Formula E (for electric cars) – and different manufacturers are keen to get involved in various areas in order to further the evolution of their road cars as well as generating publicity for their brands. The evolution or the motor car is particularly noticeable in the debates over future sources of fuel, and the ongoing arguments over whether existing engines could be made more efficient, or whether alternatives need to be developed to run future cars on fuels other than those based on hydrocarbon derivatives.

Huge progress continues to be made in the area of car safety, leading to enhanced survival rates, although the number of minor accidents does not seem to be decreasing as yet. Insurance companies have attempted to encourage responsible driving, although it seems that so far the various detection systems have difficulties in distinguishing changes in driving style that present a danger from those that occur when a car is differently loaded – such as when switching from commuter runs to supermarket collections. Road design can contribute to an enhanced experience for all users – pedestrians, cyclists and so on, as well as drivers – although systems put in place by other European countries are yet to prove popular with planners – or, indeed, road users – in the UK. The situation may, however, be pushed in new directions with the advent of autonomous cars. It is predicted that eventually self-driving cars, and cars which are able to communicate and drive in convoy, will boost the UK's economy and create a wealth of new jobs. Conversely, others predict that the advent of driverless trucks on our roads will actually lead to a net loss of jobs in the transport industry.



Above: A Lexus RX450h retrofitted by Google for its driverless car fleet, seen in 2012 (source: Steve Jurvetson via Wikimedia Commons)

Before any of these changes can take place, of course, we need to resolve a variety of legal, social, and insurance-related issues, while the industry itself is likely to undergo yet more changes as the companies which manufacture the next generation of cars may not be those we currently associate with transport and motor vehicles. It is equally possible that the concept of car ownership may undergo significant changes, with shared access packages offering increased choices of transport options becoming the norm.

Rod's presentation gave me a lot to think about, and I am definitely one of those that would be greatly saddened if we lost the option of driving our cars ourselves.

Nostalgia featured again in the short presentation we were shown immediately after the usual excellent lunch provision – sadly I didn't get to explore many of the Museums new displays this time, but I'll be back there sooner or later – the film came from the BFI's Britain on Film archive and was entitled *York Poor Children's Fresh Air Fund (Off to Filey)*. Eagle-eyed watchers have dated this excursion to 1929 from the vehicles and registrations seen, and my father was able to provide additional information on how the various bus companies organised the transport of children from the city to the countryside or coast on such outings.

Above: Still from the York film showing the first vehicle, VY653, about to set off, with a dignitary or official on the right (BFI). While the quality of reproduction from a film may not be a clear as one might wish, it gives a glimpse of the event.

The film presentation was followed by a short plenary by the morning's presenters (sadly, it seemed we were to miss out on Philip Kirk's advertised update – the film standing somewhat in its stead). This session again concentrated mostly on buses, although some interesting points were also raised as to whether autonomous cars might reduce the exclusion suffered by those forced to give up diving for medical reasons.

The penultimate presentation of the day came from Martin Higginson, who delivered a paper on *The Evolution of Road Passenger Transport Heritage Branding*, which he had previously presented at York University. I found this session particularly fascinating, and look forward to reading the full paper by Martin elsewhere in this edition of *The Journal*.

The day concluded with a presentation by Richard Wallace on *The Centenary of the East Kent Road Car Company Ltd*. and based on his recent book (*East Kent – A Century of Service, 1916 – 2016*, published by Crowood). Prior to the company's formation, the first buses to provide a service in Deal were introduced by Sidney Garcke in 1908. Garcke had connections with the BMMO concern in the Midlands, and made use of some redundant Birmingham buses for his new enterprise. In 1916 Garcke's company merged with four others in the area to form East Kent. This new fleet was regularly modernised, leading to a wide variety of buses being seen on the roads of that area in the following years.

Notable points in the Company's history were the development of express services to and from London in the 1920s; the acquisition of the Dover and Thanet tramways systems in 1936 to 1937, requiring large numbers of new Leyland Titan double-decks to replace the trams; the challenges of wartime when East Kent became known as 'The Busman's Malta' and the massive expansion of coach-air services to the continent in the 1950s and 60s.

In the post-war years changes also took place in bus procurement, such that, apart from a brief interlude with Guy double-decks, the Company moved from its traditional suppliers, Leyland and Dennis, to AEC from 1955. Nationalisation was followed by a short period as an independent concern from 1987, which led to a resurgence of a traditionally-inspired livery (referencing back to Martin's talk!) and then the company was finally taken over by the Stagecoach group in 1993. This led more recently to significant improvements to bus services in the area.

Above: JG 5427, a petrol-engined Leyland TS7/Park Royal Coach from 1935 (M&D and East Kent Bus Club)

The presentation concluded with a discussion of some East Kent buses which have been the subject of preservation projects, some of which have been successful, while others have not. The preservation of large commercial vehicles is not for the faint-hearted and requires large amounts of work and money as well as enthusiasm!

All in all, this was another excellent meeting!

Gina M Dungworth

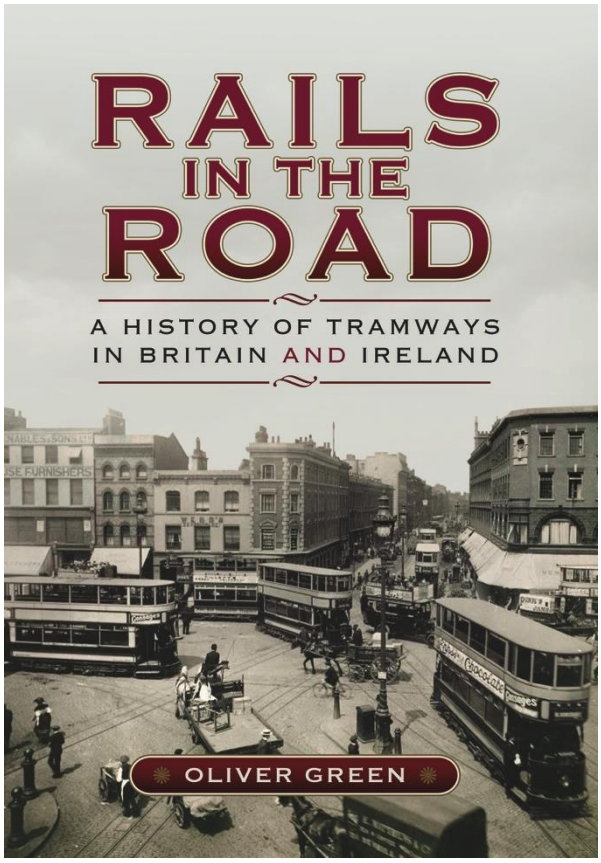
Above: PFN 874, an AEC Regent V/Park Royal double-deck from 1959, which is now preserved (Sophie Wallace).

Query Corner

'What was the BRTA?'

A query has been raised regarding a plaque on the outside of a hotel in Malvern, as illustrated below. The 'BRTA' may have been some form of transport or tourism organisation, perhaps identifying the hotel for use of its members. Suggestions welcome.

Reviews



'Rails in the Road: a History of Tramways in Britain and Ireland Oliver Green. Pen & Sword Transport, 47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 2AS, <www.pen-and-sword.co.uk>. 269 pages, lavishly illustrated, much of it in colour, hardback, £30. Includes 10 pages of chapter notes, 3 pages of further reading and 3 page timeline of tramway. ISBN 978 1 47382 223 8.

By any standards, this is a blockbuster of a book, and one which will command an essential place for anyone with an interest in tramways. The standards of its presentation and illustration demonstrate the revolution that has taken place in book publishing in recent years. With experience in the museum world as well as in transport planning, Oliver Green is conscious of the way London has dominated so much of tramway development in Britain and Ireland, yet is able to offer a broad-based comparison with the provinces. Skills first demonstrated in the London Transport Jubilee book co-authorship in 1983 combine text and illustration.

In the early 1960s when most street tramways were coming to an end, historians were busy cataloguing the past, with a timeline starting around 1860, and ending, apart from survivals like Blackpool, with the closure of Glasgow in 1962. But in this book, the author continues the story into the present and speculates positively and realistically into the future. Far from closing the lid on tramway history he shows how much there is to be explored still.

There are still matters on which historians so far have been largely silent, such as the government-funded switch from austerity to investment in 1935 when Stanley Baldwin replaced Ramsey MacDonald as prime minister. Also needing further study are the effects of the industrial depression in reducing tramway traffic in the 1930s. Oliver Green does not mention the Dearne District system, but recent research shows how this was a local authority strategy to maintain its rating revenue in the face of coal mining problems.

Above: An illustration from Oliver Green's book, showing trams in Mare Street, Hackney, near the North London Railway station, c1890. Presumably taken on a Sunday morning as this normally busy high street is empty and the shops are shuttered.

Oliver Green nevertheless takes broad-brush approach to tramway history which enables what might otherwise be regarded as a lavishly-illustrated coffee-table album of illustrations to provide a full-scale work of history, more of an encyclopaedia. In this book the author has taken his LT Jubilee book approach to weaving text and illustrations much further, so that time and time again you feel that you are there, experiencing what he describes. In this, he has had to make choices: to omit the detailed but miniscule maps of Bett and Gillham, the management stories of Klapper's "Golden Age". I would like to have seen more financial and political analysis – why things happened as they did are often as fascinating as the details of when and how they took place; why Stuart Pilcher embarked on tramway abandonment in Manchester, while Walter Marks went on building reserved tracks in Liverpool.

Above: A further illustration, showing the Old Kent Road in South London with a Greenwich tram approaching c1885. Drivers of other vehicles often locked one wheel into a tram rail groove to keep their horse on track, as demonstrated by the cart in the foreground.

Separate chapters consider war effects, including the bizarre story of the ring of tramcar-mounted searchlights that helped to defend London against Zeppelin attacks, and the remarkable resistance of conduit tramways to air-raid damages. Other special features are on decorated cars, comic postcards, opening days, accidents and greeting cards. Pictures and detailed captions tell the story. The book tells a classic story and will become a valuable account of it, and, at £30, what splendid investment. **Ian Yearsley**

Great North of Scotland Railway Road Services: Railway Buses in North East Scotland 1854-1930 Mike Mitchell, Great North of Scotland Railway Association, North Cairncake, Cuminestown, Turriff, AB53 5YS http://www.gnsra.org.uk/gnsra_sales_page.htm. 128 pages, fully illustrated in colour, A4 size, card covers. 978-0902343-29-0 £17.00, including postage in the UK.

This is the familiar story of birth to death of bus services operated directly by railway companies, although inevitably flavoured by features unique to each. Here it is tale of the Great North of Scotland Railway (GNSR). By the early 1900s the motor bus had reached a position where it could be a realistic - and more significantly, a cheaper - alternative to building a railway branch line. After the First World War cut-throat competition arose from many small bus operators, often with newer and more comfortable vehicles than the railways could offer. In the late 1920s direct bus operation ceased after the four main line railway companies reached an accommodation with the larger territorial bus companies.

Thus the GNSR was one of many. Certainly it was the first railway company to operate buses in Scotland, perhaps reflecting the sparsity of passenger traffic in its rural area. Whether it was the second company to do so in Great Britain depends on what view is taken of the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway associated service, which began in May 1903. Its vehicles were purchased by the Great Western Railway to inaugurate its own bus services in August 1903. The GNSR service began in May 1904, and developed into a quite extensive network. The impetus for it seems to have come from William Deuchar, the company's Passenger Superintendent, and after his retirement in February 1918 momentum was lost.

Attractively laid out and presented, this account of GNSR buses with many original illustrations is a pleasure to pick up. Especially useful is the inclusion of an index and the business case for bus operation. Too often technical description is not balanced by the rationale for action. Indeed, so thorough is the research that it is doubtful that more can be said, except perhaps for the reason why each route was inaugurated.

There is much of the story of the development of the road transport network in the company's area before it began bus services but little after. Of course this is not directly relevant to the story of direct operation but suggesting sources to continue the story would be helpful. Similarly some consideration of the wider context is needed. The London & North Eastern Railway (LNER) after absorbing the GNSR did not simply decide on the fate of its constituent's bus services in isolation; it did so in the light of the national accommodation with territorial bus companies, of which is was one of the principal architects.

Structurally the book suffers by being split into seventeen chapters, of which eight are of one or two pages. It might have been better to have fewer chapters with a linking narrative thread so as to give a less fragmented read. Curiously, despite the title, it includes a chapter on motor and steam lorries. Although motor vehicles were used in both, goods is a very different story to passengers.

But to return to an overall view, the book should be in the library of all those who are interested in the relationship between railways and buses. Perhaps the keenest measure of its value is that I purchased it before the copy arrived for review.

Reg Davies

Bedford Buses and Coaches Nigel R.B.Furness. Crowood Press, The Stables Block, Crowood Lane, Ramsbury, Marlborough, Wilts, SN8 2HR. <www.crowood.com> ISBN 978 1 78500 207 6. £35.00 hardback, 224pp, extensively illustrated, mostly in colour.

This very comprehensive and well-presented history follows the similar history of Bristol and ECW by the same author and publisher, as reviewed in issue 77 of this journal. In this case the focus is on Bedford, a marque owned by General Motors of the USA whose production was concentrated at Luton, and also extended for a period to Dunstable.

Stemming from the Chevrolet designs, used as a lightweight single-decker by many British operators, the Bedford name as such first appeared in 1931. Large-scale production lasted for many years, but decline set in, and the last vehicles were manufactured in 1987. Production was single-decker throughout, often meeting the needs of smaller operators. Successive chapters cover each model, or groups of models, from the pre-war WLG and related types, through the OB and OWB normal-control single deckers built on a large scale in the 1940s, the long-lasting forward-control SB (made until 1985), and the successive models (including the distinctive six-wheeled VAL) through to the final JJL and YNV types. Very extensive technical information is provided on each model, and box inserts provide further information, notably a concise and helpful description of retarders. Other inserts highlight individual preserved vehicles, with observations from their owners. Separate chapters cover engines, vehicles based on goods chassis bodied for passenger use, and preservation issues. A feature stemming from American ownership was continued use of Imperial rather than metric units, an anachronism still found in the US today.

The whole volume is very extensively illustrated, largely in colour, with obvious use of black and white for early years. The wide range of bodywork styles is noteworthy – whilst the vast majority of UK vehicles were bodied by Duple or Plaxton, a wide range of smaller manufacturers was also involved. For this reviewer, illustrations from operators in my home county of Lincolnshire brought back many memories. Mention of the extensive export orders also recalled a visit to Penang in Malaysia where SBs were used on urban services in 1979.

Data are provided on prices of models offered, which, while clearly affected by subsequent inflation, indicate the extent to which Bedfords were relatively cheap compared with other manufacturers at the time. The author also attempts to estimate total production of different models, but is clearly frustrated by lack of reliable and consistent sources for such data.

Bedfords clearly offered very good fuel consumption, as indicated in many road tests described, but also began to seem dated, offering poor acceleration in contrast to other manufacturers from the 1960s onward. Vertical-engined layouts were retained, even after a shift from a front to mid-ships positon, necessitating a high floor level. Air suspension was not adopted until the final YNV model. In contrast, the JJL midibus for town centre shuttle services was ahead of its time, but produced only on a very small scale. It would be interesting to speculate why the failure to innovate was so marked. Was this associated with particular managers, or the general policy of the owning company?

There are some minor queries one might raise, such as the comment that exterior hooks for cycles are no longer permitted (in a caption to a New Zealand SB from 1967), whereas these may still be found in some parts of the world. Overall, however, the approach is exceptionally thorough and the very high standard of presentation makes this book excellent value.

Peter White

Police Stop! Patrol and response vehicles in England and Wales Paddy Carpenter. Amberley Publishing, The Hill, Merrywalks, Stroud, Gloucs GL5 4EP, www.amberley-books.com. ISBN 978-1-4456-5831-5. 96pp, card covers, extensively illustrated, mostly in colour. £14.99.

Drawing extensively on the archives of the Police Vehicle Enthusiasts' Club, this book provides coverage of a subject usually given little attention. Some brief chapters at the start provide an informative history of the early use of vehicles by police forces, highlighting the degree to which some were slow to adapt to motorised transport, other than for specialised purposes. The role of national policy vis a vis the discretion given to the local forces is also discussed. However, most of the book is devoted to a more recent period from the late 1960s, with numerous illustrations, but a text that focuses on minor variations in livery, often with the author's subjective views highlighted. A broader history of the more recent period might have been of wider interest, but this seems to be directed to a very specialist audience. **Peter White**

Destination Western Front (2nd Edition), Roy Larkin. ISBN: 978-0-9565014-6-2. 247mm x 178mm, 192 pages including over 125 images, hardback**.** £19.95 +£4.00 p&p. Published by Historic Roadways Ltd, PO Box 6924, Tadley, RG24 4UD, Tel: 07814 559470

Roy Larkin has published the second edition of his *tour de force*, Destination Western Front, which details the contribution made to the Great War effort by London buses and their drivers and mechanics.

The book has gone from paperback to hard cover and increased in size and content due mainly to copious material being uncovered by the author at The National Archives, the London Metropolitan Archive and the Royal Logistics Corps museum. This new edition includes detailed narrative of the day-to-day activities of the various motorbus-equipped military companies which is backed up by a large appendix of information including dates, number of buses and routes of the various convoys. It is remarkable that such material survives given the lapse of time and, in the case of London archives, the unfortunate and ironic destruction of records during the Second World War.

He sets out to tell 'the most complete story' of the Army Service Corps companies on the Western Front and of the London General Omnibus Company on the Home Front. There are, of course, other histories of this period and of the involvement of the LGOC buses and crews, in particular Dr Bill Ward's 'Ole Bill, London Buses and the First World War' published by the London Transport Museum in 2014.

Roy Larkin's work starts off in a slightly haphazard fashion by giving a brief introduction to the LGOC B-type bus and its Daimler equivalent. He then provides us with a short piece about 'Ole Bill', the bus chosen by the LGOC to represent and commemorate those employees who lost their lives. Roy then goes on to give a lot of detail about the War Office trials in 1908 and 1912. Since the B-type did not appear until 1910 it would seem logical to put the Trials first as background to the Subsidy schemes to which the LGOC subscribed. The involvement of the LGOC and the B-type in particular then follows from August 1914 onward.

A chapter on 'The Home Front' gives interesting insights into the relationship between the LGOC and the authorities and the effect of the war on LGOC's domestic operations. Your reviewer was disappointed to find no reference to the Zeppelin bombing incidents, especially that which killed Driver Frank Kreppel and his conductor at Liverpool Street on the 7th/8th September 1915; an episode which has been written up and published in this Journal.

In wrapping up the story of the LGOC's contribution to the war effort, which perhaps should have included the story of Ole Bill in chronological order, reference could have been made to the London Transport Museum's reconstructed B2737 which is currently finished in Army Service Corps condition and tells the story in three dimensions. Your reviewer was privileged to accompany the 'Battlebus' to the Western Front in 2014 as a driver but was not obliged to dodge bullets or to sleep on the bus. He returned alive and suitably humbled.

Roy Larkin obviously has devoted a large chunk of his life to this project and is to be congratulated. It is very challenging to make a readable story out of what are mainly scraps of historical information from impersonal diaries and official documentation without turning it into a list of detail and events. The detail is fascinating and the photographic contribution most impressive. There can't be many relevant images from the period left for publication. The use of gloss paper with good image reproduction is very welcome and the asking price very reasonable.

The author has made a very creditable contribution to our knowledge of the period and of the LGOC's involvement and the work is recommended to members.

Ian Read

Are Trams Socialist? : Why Britain Has No Transport Policy Christian Wolmar, London Publishing Partnership, 2016. ISBN 978-1-907994-56-2. £9.99, 114pp www.londonpublishingpartnership.co.uk

Christian Wolmar is well-known as a railway author who has published widely on different aspects of UK and world railways, *including Broken Rails* (on rail privatization, 2001), *The Subterranean Railway* (London Underground, 2004*)* and *To the Edge of the World* (Trans-Siberian Railway, 2013). This book covers all modes of land transport, with the emphasis on road transport.

Are Trams Socialist? is an overtly political review of why Britain has not adopted and stuck to co-ordinated, multi-modal transport policies; an aim seemingly unachievable in the politically polarized Britain, where ever since the turnpike road era transport policies have been a political football.

The author is at his best when he is being political, like bemoaning the paucity of memorable transport

ministers. He singles out Barbara Castle and 'possibly' Alastair Darling, but asks why 'dear old' Alfred Barnes, Minister of Transport throughout the Atlee Labour government (1945-51), is not better remembered, despite having ushered in the Transport Act 1948's comprehensive nationalization programme.

The book is mostly not about trams, but covers transport across the board and pays due attention to historical developments. Turnpike roads, bringing enhanced funding, were intended to improve poor state of the highways, which had resulted from their mismanagement and neglect by unwilling and under-funded local councils. In the interim, a short-lived canal era, whose development was fostered by funding through joint stock companies, provided an alternative, but not the expected long-term solution. The turnpikes failed to meet the needs of heavy steam carriages, which decamped to the emerging railways, putting paid to much of the canal trade too. The 'railway century' started with the opening of the Liverpool & Manchester in 1830.

Trams are shown as offering a cheaper solution than railways and therefore being suited to towns too small for suburban railways. Roads receive extensive coverage. Cycling is considered briefly, with cyclists considered to have brought about their own demise by lobbying for smoother roads, enabling the car to end their short period of success. The slowness of bringing in controls on cars is criticized; for example no driving test until 1935. There is a particularly useful summary for road transport historians of how the motoring lobby arose, spearheaded by rich aristocrats such as Lord Montague of Beaulieu, the road transport industry, the AA and RAC and oil companies, which prevented nationalisation of the railways, for fear they would be too powerful and influential within the transport ministry. Alfred Barnes was, according to Wolmar, persuaded by the British Road Federation in 1946 to propose a ten-year plan for 800 miles of motorways.

We then move to the era of 'roads and more roads' – the once discredited phenomenon of 'predict and provide' to which politicians have regrettably reverted in recent years – and to the love-hate relationship with road building: Twyford Down and the Newbury Bypass, for example The beginnings of a rail renaissance are described, a reversal of some of the excesses of Beeching; but now leading to a backlash against (especially high speed) rail investment too, especially by people who perceive they will not benefit from the new projects.

Wolmar is excellent at summarizing situations succinctly, with reference for example to profitable bus services, the outlawing of cross-subsidy and the growing difficulty local authorities have in funding tendered loss-making services. He is objective in setting out the facts of whole-system franchising as practiced in London and in many other European countries. He laments the failure of John Prescott's forecast in 2000 that 25 tramways would be built in Britain by 2010. Prescott's enthusiasm, we are told, was not share by his cabinet colleagues, who were "terrified of the negative effects of raising the cost of motoring". The overturning of "most of Prescott's cherished schemes" by Alistair Darling in 2001 is condemned - a setback from which Britain's transport policies have yet to recover. Wolmar endorses Phil Goodwin's rejection of road construction - 'building our way out of trouble' - as a solution to the transport problem.

The chapter on technology concentrates on driverless cars and Uber and feels a little out of place alongside the rest of the book's mainstream politico-economic theme. Wolmar berates the Department for Transport 'Webtag' approach to evaluating transport investment: the practice of valuing business travellers' time more highly than that of leisure users and the principle of summing myriad small time savings to quantify aggregate benefits. He points out that cost benefit analysis is designed to assist in the ranking of alternatives and should not be used to show whether or not a scheme is worthwhile *per se*. Wolmar appears to favour constraining travel demand rather than attempting to meet it in the most benign way. He condemns the roads programme, but also HS2 ('a political project that does not stand up to scrutiny'), yet purports to favour 'better public transport'. His rationale is policymakers' failure to pay sufficient regard to climate change. He seems to consider the provision of better cycling facilities and local public transport as alternatives to investing in new capacity for long distance transport, whereas in reality both are needed.

Finally Wolmar returns to the question in his title and concludes that trams are not socialist. His exemplar is Switzerland, whose admirable public transport system, he writes, depends on local political control and electorates willing to back it. Many of the most supportive policies originated with the local populace, rather than being thought up by experts and elected representatives; despite the fact that the country's "last socialist resident was probably Lenin". He identifies solutions that many would support and shows what is

needed, but he does not answer the 'how' question: how to get the socially and economically very different Britain to that position.

This is a thought-provoking and useful work, which contains many valuable insights and demonstrates the breadth of the author's knowledge and understanding. The reader is left wanting more on such under-reported matters as the historical – and continuing - role of lobbying and special pleading. Transport historians will find it of particular value for its historical insights and for Wolmar's willingness to speak his mind. Even if trams are not socialist, we are left with little doubt of the author's political stance; a rare quality in a book on transport history and policy. **Martin Higginson**

William Goodchild

The picture below shows William Goodchild, grandfather of Keith Turner, who was born in Isleham, Cambridgeshire in 1884 to a typical rural family. He wanted to do something different, and moved to Battersea in London. At some time he got a job with the General Omnibus Company & became a driver. He is illustrated with his conductor and a B type bus in 1912. He must have stayed with the company all his working life moving to Heading Street in Hendon sometime in the 1920s or 1930s, living there for the rest of his life. Keith's mother & uncle were born there. He was based in Hendon Bus Garage, working for London Transport, and even after he retired stayed on at the garage parking & shunting buses. He died in 1969 at about 85 years old. He was quite a local character, well known at his local Pub the Chequers in Hendon

Journal Archive

In the first of a regular series of extracts from the Journal archives here is an article and two follow-up pieces from Journals 2, 4 and 7. Ian Yearsley was the Research Coordinator who started the ball rolling in response to a query about the origin of queuing for buses.

Journal 2:

Queuing for Buses

There is a quaint old British custom, which still survives, whereby passengers waiting for a bus form a queue. I believe that this goes back to World War 2, and to a requirement then promulgated, that six or more persons waiting at a bus (or tram) stop must form a queue. My recollection is that this was introduced under Defence Regulations c.1941, but I have not been able to confirm this. Moreover, I could be wrong, and the requirement may not have been in Defence Regulations at all. Can you help me to find the origin of the bus queue? Is there still, in 1991, any legal requirement for six or more persons, waiting for a bus, to form a queue?

I have looked, in vain, at the following possible sources of information:
The History of British Bus Services, by John Hibbs
A History of London Transport, Vol.2, by Barker and Robbins
London Buses in Wartime, by J.H. Price
Bus Operation, by L.D. Kitchin (1949)

The Manchester Tram, by Ian Yearsley (1962) confirms (at page 101) that at least an invitation to queue (though not a requirement?) existed in certain places before the War; but it neither confirms nor disproves that the Regulation was a wartime one.

Journal 4:

Queueing for Buses

The question in Newsletter no.2 brought forth several replies. Neil D.G. Mackenzie, Executive Director & General Manager, Lothian Region Transport, sent details of a Parliamentary Question on the subject on 12 March 1941. Mr Wooton-Davies asked the Minister of Transport whether, in view of the crushing to death of a little boy in a rush for an omnibus at Carlisle, he would advise all local authorities to prescribe the introduction of the queue system for all omnibus and tramway services? Mr E.Brown, replying for the Minister, said that some local authorities already exercised powers under local bye-laws, but he would take up the matter with the Minister.

The Minister was clearly impressed, for on 16 March 1942 the Regulation of Traffic (Formation of Queues) Order was issued, coming into force on 12 April 1942. This stated that, where barrier rails were provided, intending passengers should queue between them and board the vehicle in that order; where no barrier rails existed, any six or more people should form a queue and keep in a line of not more than two abreast on the footway. There was a specific prohibition of queue-jumping.

The 1942 Order was reproduced recently in the Tramway Museum Society's *Contact* newsletter; Neil Mackenzie also points out that Edinburgh Corporation had the power to regulate queues under its bye-laws.

A study of Municipal Tramways Association papers and the trade press might well show tramway undertakings applying queueing regulations much earlier. The picture of Manchester's first queue barrier on page 56 of *The Manchester Tramways* (Yearsley and Groves, 1988) was taken sometime between the end of 1903 and the beginning of 1914, probably before 1910. The London County Council acquired powers to make bye-laws relating to queues in the LCC (Tramways & Improvements) Act 1912.

.Queuing for Buses

MPs have been asked to do away with a little known clause in the 1937 London Transport Passengers Act which gave bus and Underground inspectors sweeping powers to force commuters into a line, no more than two abreast, and despatch queue-jumpers to the courts to face fines of up to £2. The obscure bylaw is being repealed because it has never been used and is regarded as superfluous. The queue, perhaps the nation's most civilised and restrained institution, is so well established it does not require compulsion.

Thanks to Roy Bevin for the cutting from the *Daily Telegraph* of 21 September 1994, from which the above is extracted. The statutory status of bus queues was previously discussed in Newsletters nos. 2 and 4.

Little-known Motoring Heroes: pioneers you may never have heard of

Rod Ashley

Formerly a university lecturer, Rod established his own consultancy company 25 years ago, working with education bodies across the UK and Europe. Chair of his local IAM Roadsmart group, Rod is an avid motorist who has driven extensively across Europe, North America and South Africa. The author of many books, Rod's latest is a social history of neutral Portugal in the Second World War: 'Wolfram Wars: Exposing The Secret Battle in Portugal' (Bennion Kearny, 2016).

The automotive world is full of big characters and entrepreneurs with plenty of self-confidence. Think Gianni Agnelli of FIAT ("*You need an odd number of people to run a motor company and three is too many …*"), Henry Ford's passion for efficient manufacture, or the genius for lateral thinking and space-engineering of Alec Issigonis, and so on.

However, there are also engineers, entrepreneurs and motoring godfathers who have made a quieter but nonetheless significant impact upon the automotive world, not necessarily because they were shy and retiring – but simply that their efforts did not reach a mass audience, even if their products did so. Here are three lesser-known motoring figures ….

Leslie Hore-Belisha

Today's regular reshuffling of Government Ministers can make it difficult to recall the names of recent Ministers. Certain Transport Ministers stick in the mind – Ernest Marples in the late 1950s is associated with the opening of the early British motorways; Barbara Castle in the mid-60s became famous for refusing to use her official car until rear seatbelts were fitted; and Steven Norris's subsequent career in the 1990s was with various influential transport lobbying groups before he stood unsuccessfully as Mayor of London. There is also the apocryphal story of one Minister of State for Transport in Mrs Thatcher's government whose official car broke down on a central London street. Anxious to get to his next appointment, he was shepherded to the adjacent Tube station by his chauffeur and, on boarding the underground train, was immediately heard to enquire where the buffet car was.

But Hore-Belisha? Why should he be remembered? In fact he became associated with three crucial aspects of motoring, one of which still bears his name.

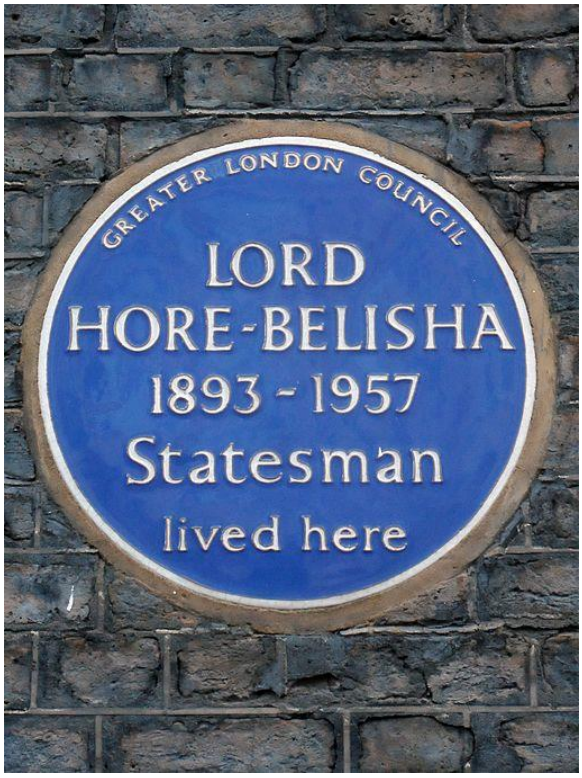
Above: A pair of Belisha beacons at Cloudesley Place, Islington, in 2007

(Source: Stephen McKay under creative commons licence)

Born in Devon in 1893 to an influential Jewish family, his father was an insurance manager –these two aspects playing a significant part in his later life as a Government Minister. Educated at Clifton College and Oxford University, he saw action in the First World War, leaving as a Major, before becoming a barrister and then a Conservative MP. Shortly after being appointed Minister of Transport in 1934, he was crossing a busy London street when a speeding sports car nearly caused him 'serious injury or worse.'

Hore-Belisha introduced the Road Traffic Act of 1934. Its key features were to re-introduce a 30mph speed limit in built-up areas (overturning the removal of the speed limit of an Act just four years earlier); to make a driving test compulsory for all new drivers and to strengthen the legal requirement for insurance for all drivers. The basis of this legislation still exists today and it is difficult to recognise how far-reaching its introduction was. Indeed, my own father never took a driving test, having been taught to drive for his job with Post Office Telephones (the nationalised pre-cursor of BT).

Alongside the introduction of the driving test (including the long-forgotten hand signals), he oversaw the rewriting of the Highway Code, which again, is still with us today, although in a much-modified form to reflect the considerable change in motoring. Published in 1931 as an eighteen page 'pamphlet', Hore-Belisha expanded its scope and detail and, reflecting its focus on road safety for all, incorporated advice from the Pedestrians' Association.



Above: The plaque commemorating Lord Hore-Belisha at 16 Stafford Place, Victoria, London SW1 (source: 'Spudgun67' under Wikimedia Commons)

1934 was a busy year for Hore-Belisha as he also introduced as part of these measures what we now call the zebra crossing, accompanied by a flashing beacon on each pavement. Known officially as 'Belisha beacons', these crossings with their distinctive amber globes have evolved into 'pelican' and 'puffin' crossings and have reached many parts of the world.

Given the extensive legislation and motoring changes brought about by Hore-Belisha, why did his term of office last only three years? By 1937, awareness was increasing of the perceived Nazi threat. Hore-Belisha was warning about possible war and he became Secretary of State for War from 1937 to 1940. However, he proved unpopular with some military chiefs and Cabinet colleagues who felt that he was more concerned about the fate of European Jewry than about Britain. Historians now detect considerable anti-Semitism against him. After the war he became the first (and only) Baron Hore-Belisha, the baronetcy dying with him in 1954.

Percy Shaw

Having a pub named after you is not a bad epitaph. Nell Gwyn, Charlie Chaplin and Sir Frank Whittle are among those 'commoners' who have achieved this accolade. So you may wonder how Wetherspoon's *The Percy Shaw* in Halifax got its name. Indeed, a pub is an integral part of this story.

A local man, Percy Shaw is one of the pioneers of safe motoring but whose name is not well-known today. Driving home from his customary pub one foggy evening, he caught sight of a cat at the roadside. In fact, it was just its eyes Shaw could see, piercing the darkness and the mist. What if, thought this self-employed tarmac layer, there were a series of cats' eyes spaced out along the centre line of the road to light the way home?

A canny Yorkshire inventor, Percy set to work – literally to 'copy cat'. Sheathing an iron shoe in rubber, he implanted two reflectors cut like diamonds. In 1934, he patented a design and in 1935 (in the light of the emphasis on road safety in the 1934 Road Traffic Act), Percy established his own company, Reflecting Roadstuds Ltd. – which still trades today.

The real genius of the cat's-eye lies in its self-cleaning ability. The rubber mount is suspended in a bracket, so that every time a vehicle runs over a cat's eye, a squirt of residual rainwater in the metal casing cleans the reflectors. They don't need irrigating, topping up or any special care – just let the rain do its work.

Above: Close-up of Catseye®. (Source: Wikipedia Commons)

Percy became a multi-millionaire, living in the same home that his parents had moved into when he was just two years old right up until his death in 1976, aged 86. A 1968 Alan Whicker documentary revealed that Percy

lived a Spartan life, with hardly any furniture except a TV set in each of the three rooms, each permanently on and tuned to a different station. Maybe the shining white dot in the centre of the screen when transmission ended reminded him of his own invention.

But he did have some pleasures – the pub, company, beer, TV and, tucked away in his garage, a Rolls Royce. In 1965 Percy was awarded the OBE in recognition of his substantial contribution to road safety, an invention we all take-for-granted.

Major Ivan Hirst

This army officer was responsible for the rescue of the virtually-obliterated Volkswagen plant in Wolfsburg at the end of the Second World War. The Volkswagen ('People's Car') had famously been designed by Dr Ferdinand Porsche in the 1930s, at Hitler's command, to create an aspirational form of transport for ordinary German families who could then speed along the newly-developed autobahn network. The war deflected the factory's largely forced-labour manufacturing efforts into military equipment generally and Nazi defeat left German society and industry shattered.

Some observers felt that this funny little, rear-engined, air-cooled car could have no commercial appeal or engineering success. Indeed the official British report stated that "… *The vehicle does not meet the fundamental technical requirement of a motor-car .. it is quite unattractive to the average buyer ... To build the car commercially would be a completely uneconomic enterprise*." Indeed, Rootes and Morris turned down. the opportunity to develop the Beetle. Sir William

Above: 1953 VW Beetle in National Motor Museum, Beaulieu. (Source: Wikipedia Commons).

Rootes was purported to have said to Hirst: "*If you think we're going to build cars in this place, you're a bloody fool, young man!*" The Major, however, took a very different view. Charged initially with the refurbishment of the bomb-damaged factory to become a repair workshop for British army vehicles, he persuaded his superiors to build the car. Gaining an order for 20,000 of them, nearly 3,000 were delivered by the end of 1945 alone.

Hirst was firmly of the opinion that it was indeed the German people's car and that the resurrection of the factory would re-ignite industry, self-esteem and social fabric. By 1949, Hirst's mission was complete – the factory had been rebuilt, pressing tools were re-commissioned, an export network to Holland had been established and, with due sensitivity, he appointed a German plant manager, Heinrich Nordhoff, who shrewdly observed later: "*By one of the ironic jokes history is sometimes tempted to produce, it was the occupation powers who brought Hitler's dream into reality*".

Throughout his life, Hirst was a supporter of the Volkswagen enterprise. He later became a senior official in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (the OECD) in Paris, and in his final years of retirement in his native Yorkshire, was seen in his eighties driving the 'new' Beetle. Eschewing his own contribution, he put the early success of Volkswagen down to effective teamwork between the British and Germans. How Rootes and Morris may have rued the day they turned down this opportunity, both later going out of business, only to see the Volkswagen Group become the third largest vehicle manufacturer in the world (2012, pre-'emissions scandal' figures).

Further reading:

For Agnelli, Rolls and Royce

Roberts P. (1978). *Pictorial History of Cars*. London: Octopus.

VW Beetle / Ivan Hirst:

Chapman G. (2012). *The VW Beetle Story*. Stroud: History Press.

Richter R. (2003). *Ivan Hirst: British Officer and Manager of Volkswagen's Postwar Recovery*. Cambridge, Mass: Bentley. From HISTORICAL NOTES: A Series of Publications from Volkswagen Corporate History Department

May J & Dolling P. (2007). *James May's Magnificent Machines*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Catseyes / Percy Shaw:

Edwards F. (1972). *Catseyes: Biography of Percy Shaw.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Hore-Belisha:

Minney R J (ed). (1992). *The Private Papers of Hore-Belisha*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.

The 1935 Highway Code. HMSO

Association Chairman to step down

Following five years at the helm, our Chairman, Dr Bob McCloy, is to step down at the AGM on 25th March.

Bob had a stellar career in local government, initially in education and then as Chief Executive of the Royal Borough of Kingston. He was also regional director of the Local Government Association and chairman of the South and West London Area Manpower Board. In retirement, Bob has been far from idle and achieved PhD with a thesis which was subsequently published as 'Travels in the Valleys' by The Historical Association.

Much has been achieved during his tenure:

- a partnership has been formed with the University of Wales Trinity St Davids (who now print the Journal without cost to the Association);
- the Association and its underlying company is now on a firmer organisational footing;
- the Journal is now regularly and punctually published (with thanks to the Editor);
- Wales on Wheels is now established as an annual event;
- Our two meetings per year continue with a wide variety of excellent speakers.

The Association and all members owe a great debt to Bob – and we will have an opportunity of expressing at the AGM

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.

Your Association Needs You!

We are now looking for a new Chairman.

Can you step up to the plate?

An enthusiastic leader is sought to build on Bob's good work.

If you are interested, see the enclosed sheet.

The Association AGM and Spring Meeting will be held on

Saturday, 25 March.

at 1100

The location is

The Ramada Hotel

The Butts, Coventry, CV1 3GG.

(please note this is NOT our usual venue)

Cost is £18, which includes tea/coffee on arrival, buffet lunch and car parking. Formal notification is enclosed with this edition of the Journal

The next issue will be no. 88, May 2017. Copy date is 9 April. Contributions should be sent to the editor at the address shown on page 2.