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The Finest in the Kingdom - Liverpool Carters

A very comprehensive talk on this subject was provided by Sharon Brown, Curator of Land Transport and Industrial Collections, at the Museum of Liverpool at the Association's October 2018 meeting. The following text is based on that she has helpfully supplied.

Liverpool's working horses were the finest in the kingdom according to this quote in a guidebook in 1914. "It is the boast of Liverpool that the horses employed in the city's industry are the finest in the kingdom, and it is a boast to which it is scarcely possible to take exception." But it wasn't just the horses that were the best, it was the carters too. Liverpool carters were renowned

for their handling skills and the phenomenal weights they hauled. An American journalist visiting Liverpool in 1835 reported 'there is a striking peculiarity in the carts and dray horses of this town. Both are heavy beyond anything. One of the carts outweighs four of ours but is still considered only a load for an ordinary team. The horses are proportionately large...their legs are like mill posts.'

For more than 250 years horses were used to move goods to and from Liverpool docks and businesses. At their peak more than 20,000 horses worked on the streets of Liverpool, more than in any other city outside London. The 1916 Handbook of Employment recorded 1,012 boys, 9,925 men and 12 women as being employed within the city. Most held permanent posts and others were taken on as required from 'stands' or 'carters corners'. At Carters Corners haulage companies would send their foreman/runner to choose workers to cover holiday relief or sickness. Some got a good run of work or a full time job this way. There were two official corners in the City – one at Hopwood Street, off Scotland Road (north), and one at Warwick Street in Toxteth (south).

One of the largest companies was Jarvis Robinson, formed in 1920 following a merger between smaller firms. They operated 200 team horse wagons (that's 400 horses) and at their stables in Canal Street they had their own farriers

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The Editor is always interested in hearing from members and non-members who would like to write an original piece about transport history and/or research for inclusion in this journal or online.

From this calendar year, a revised publication schedule has been adopted, with issues in March, June, September and December.

and a sick bay where sick or injured horses could rest and be treated. Carters always worked long hours. They arrived at the stables early in the morning to prepare their horses for the day and always made sure the horse was fed, watered, and settled at the end of the day. Saturday was a normal day or half day of work and on Sundays the stables operated a rota system with each Carter coming in every few weeks to water and muck out the horses.

Getting started

Most of the Carters started going in and out of stables at an early age. They had family members who were carters or lived on streets where there were stables. Jimmy D lived on a street with four stables on it and he believed they were his saviour when his school was bombed during the war. With no school he was always in and out of the stables, helping out and that's how he got going. He hung around with an old carter, helping him, and that's how he learnt the job. Jimmy D worked in many of the main haulage companies in Liverpool and passed on his knowledge and skills to others along the way. He retained his passions for horses throughout his life.

All horses had a name and a number. The number showed the horse's age and number of years it had been in service. The names varied, but many were symbolic of the horses' strength and ability such as Expert, Imperial, Demon, and Daredevil. From 1901 Liverpool Corporation horses were named alphabetically – this meant a shortage of names in some years and some poor horses were stuck with names like Barn Owl, Zoo and Camp Bed!

Carters were seen as essential to life in Liverpool – in 1888 an article entitled 'Carters' life in Liverpool' recorded that 'In Liverpool the carter is an important individual in the enormous

carrying trade of the city. He could no more be done without than his horse and cart... he can hardly tell you why he is a carter but in the great majority of cases he became one as a colt, his sire having been previously mixed up in the same business'. Despite their importance, carters were not considered as skilled labour, but this was surely not right. Paddy M recalls "You had to know a bit about every little thing with carting, it was a skilled job in a way. You couldn't just send anyone to load a wagon, you'd have to know and learn it from a kid, how to put it on so it wouldn't come off. And then you had to be used to the horses and putting locks on and different things like that going down different brews."



Above: A nineteenth century view of Canada Timber Docks, Liverpool, showing carters' horses alongside ships of the period [R. Dudley/ National Museums Liverpool]

Jobs were varied depending on where you worked, and you had to be prepared to tackle anything from steel, to cotton, to cornflakes. Larger loads often required specialized wagons such as a timber drag or just the carter's skill and ingenuity. Cotton was a regular load for the carters, and it came in from Egypt, America, Brazil, Peru and the Congo, but most expensive cotton was from Ireland. Some carters thought it was a nuisance because it was more delicate, but others liked it because it was light and easy to manoeuvre.

Intoxicated Carters

Carters it seems were renowned for their drinking in years gone by, as shown by a letter written in May 1813 "Intoxicated Carters have long been notorious in the neighbourhood of Liverpool. Many are seen riding on the shafts while numbers are fast asleep in their carts, but of all the means adopted by these ruffians for terrifying the sober part of the community none seems so frightful as that of racing – 2 or 3 men, carts-abreast at full gallop."

There was also this negative report "By 1904, Queens Square... was devoted to the wholesale disposal of fruit and vegetables. This was beginning to cause problems. Not only was there the unblushing obstruction of the pavement by pyramids of fruit but the centre of the square was occupied by "an ever- varying body of coarse and brutal carters, likely to assail passers-by with examples of obscene badinage and the latest gutter addition of Liverpool's extensive repertoire of blackguard vocabulary".

As well as operating between the docks, warehouses and the railway, the Carters also travelled back and forth across the river, using the luggage boats over to Birkenhead and back. Barney J. Fearn had a stable on the Pier Head at the bottom near the floating roadway where he kept four horses. Depending on whether the tide was high or low the bridge would go up or down. If it was low tide the carters couldn't get up with one team of horses – they would borrow Bernie's two horses to pull them over, and it would cost about a shilling. This went into a book and Bernie went round the companies collecting his money at the end of the week. It wasn't unknown for horses going down the floating roadway to end up in the river. Carters had to put the lock on the wagon on the incline, but if that lock broke you couldn't stop it, and in they would go.

The Union

Carters had long standing complaints in relation to long working days, low pay and poor working conditions. There were no defined hours with many working from 5.30am, for up to 15 hours. The formation of the Mersey Quay and Railway Carters' Union in 1889 meant fixed rates of pay (29s a week for team carters, and 26s for single horse carters) and a 12 hour day. The union quickly became established with 3,000 members, and 35 companies agreeing to its conditions. It was renamed the Liverpool Carters and Motormen's Union in 1918 becoming the most powerful union in road haulage. In 1919 a settlement was made establishing a 48 hour week, detailed rules for overtime and one week's paid holiday after one year's service. The union became affiliated to the TGWU in 1926, and became a full section in 1947.

Accidents weren't uncommon, and Carters and horses were killed or seriously injured. Harry W had an accident as a young lad. He loaded five tons of sunflower seed out of a warehouse in New Bird Street, and set off downhill to the African Oil Mill to take it for processing into cattle food. He put the lock chain around the wheels but half way down, the lock chain snapped. He was terrified as the horse was old and couldn't hold back the weight of the wagon. He held onto the bridle, but the load pushed them down the hill, towards the traffic on the dock road and the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board locos. A passing driver spotted the problem and jumped off his motor, pulling off 140lb seed bags and throwing them under the wheels to jam the wagon. It was considered a very lucky escape, and the horse was back at work in a couple of days with cuts and bruises healing.

The Horses

The Carters had a great passion for their horses. They cared for them as if they were members of their family. Dick was a very well-known and respected Carter, and he loved his horse Velvet. He acted as a mentor for younger carters and taught them all the tricks of the trade.

Albert thought horses were like humans, some were good workers, and some were bad. Some were intelligent and some very stupid. He loved his horse called Tommy who he said was a bit mischievous. "One day they were waiting outside Bibby's Mill and you could tell from Tommy's face (that's the horse) that he was getting fed up, so he went off down to the dock gate. I thought if he turns left he's going home, and if he turns right he'll come back to the Mill. He went back to the Mill but by the time I walked back up there were men everywhere. I thought it was fire drill, but they started shouting at me to get the horse out. It had gone into the Mill and was chasing everybody out. I swear he was laughing when I led him out!"

The First World War

Throughout the First World War work as a carter continued and was vital to everyday life, but many horses were requisitioned for the war effort. In 1914 the British Army only owned eighty motor vehicles so they were heavily dependent on horses, especially on the Western Front where conditions made it very difficult to use motor vehicles. Liverpool's Canada Dock was one of the main locations for the importation of horses & mules to be conditioned and readied for service on the continent. This took place locally at Lathom Hall, and between September 1914 and November 1917, 215,000 horses and mules passed through Lathom Park on their way to war. After about a month of conditioning the horses had recovered from their traumatic sea journeys and

were well rested. They were then trained up for the work they were to do, or if not suitable put out to work on local farms. Hundreds of horses were shipped to Europe every day in awful conditions. In France they were taken by sling off the ships and rested. After being checked and passed fit for service they were sent to the front where they suffered terribly from the dreadful conditions underfoot, from disease and a gruelling workload. A lot of Carters joined up to follow their horses to war and stories of the horrors were passed on through the younger carters when they returned home.

Throughout the Second World War the carters and their horses maintained the vital link between the docks and the city. They moved 75,000 tons of food and raw materials, keeping supply lines open when many motor vehicles had been requisitioned by the Government. Carters over 25 years old and working with heavy two-wheeled vehicle were in the Reserved Occupation category.

May Parades

By the 1840's Parades of May Horses had become an annual feature of Liverpool life. They celebrated the power and majesty of the working horse. Prizes were awarded for the 'neatest and cleanest', the 'best turned out team' and the 'best decorated'. The strongest horses competed in Pulling Power competitions. St Georges Plateau became the focus of the Parades, with the May Parade becoming the largest civic ceremony of the City's calendar. All the local firms, along with the Corporation and the railways would enter, keeping their plans a closely guarded secret. Families spent weeks preparing for the shows with girls making paper flowers and boys cleaning and polishing the gears.



Above: Liverpool carter Albert Hilton with his horse decorated for the May Parade [National Museums Liverpool]

End of an Era

Lots of the Carters went on to drive motors, but not one of them had a good thing to say about this progression. Two companies battled on in the face of mechanisation. Hobbs and Clark had struggled in the 1930s, but kept going and trade was buoyed by the Second World War. By 1956 though they had only one team left, and this was soon finished up.

By the late 1960s A V Crutchley & Sons had six horses left, stabled at Strand Road in Bootle. They were mainly moving dyestuffs for ICI down to the Buenos Aries boats in Alexandra Dock – they couldn't go much further than that as the council had laid tarmac on the dock road and it was too difficult for the horses to get traction on. Following a transport strike in 1968 they decided to get rid of their last horses – and so this was the end of an era.

The Carters were unanimous in their mourning of the end of their carting days. Jimmy D said it was one of the happiest times of their lives - "working with the horses, you look forward to it, with the wagons you didn't feel like going out, but with the horses I never felt like that. I thought it was one of the best jobs you could have had in our lifetime."

The Monument – ‘Waiting’

A carters group fundraised for about 15 years to get recognition for the contribution of the carters and their horses to the economy of Liverpool and beyond. The group became a Registered Charity in 2004 and hosted events such as Benefit Nights, appearances on local radio (receiving great support from Roger Phillips), Meet the Carter events, a sponsored slim by the Chairman which raised £2,000, appeals in the Liverpool Echo.

Donations from the general public in Liverpool and further afield ranged from a couple of pounds to hundreds of pounds and were often accompanied by lovely letters detailing family connections to carting in the city. The letters have all been kept as part of the archive in the Museum of Liverpool.

The monument was designed by renowned equine sculptor Judy Boyt in consultation with the Carters. Judy has a fabulous reputation and has produced commissions for clients around the world. ‘Waiting’ stands approximately 16 hands high and sits on a slate base embellished with a potted history of the dock horses and quotes from some of the Carters. The monument was unveiled on 1st May 2010, a day the Carters thought might never come but finally the hard work and commitment paid off. It was a beautiful day and the monument, outside the Museum of Liverpool, is much loved and admired.

In June 2016 the Liverpool Carters Perpetual Trophy, based on the monument, was awarded for the first time at the Cheshire Show for the Best in Show. It was won by a beautiful shire named Nelson Suranne, and the trophy presented by the Liverpool Carters. The trophy will be presented annually ensuring the memory of the Liverpool Carters lives on.

ion

Each year on 1st May a Carters event is held at the

Museum of Liverpool where there are talks and flowers are made to decorate the monument in memory of campaign members who are now deceased.

Sharon concluded: It has been a privilege to work with such a dedicated, entertaining and knowledgeable group as the Liverpool Carters and a great source of pride that together we achieved our goal of keeping their fascinating history alive for future generations.



Above: The Horse Monument on installation in 2010
[National Museums Liverpool]

Viewpoints and opinions expressed by contributors should be seen as personal and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Association

Dr Vishnu Vardhan, Assistant Professor in the Department of Statistics at Pondicherry University in India, is interested in exploring the history of the bus industry in that country, especially old photos. If you are able to assist, please contact via the editor.

Army Motor Coach Companies

John Howie

Introduction

With the outbreak of the Second World War the Army identified a need for a considerable amount of additional transport. This was initially met through the hiring of vehicles on an *ad hoc* basis but due to the immediacy of some of the requests, it proved difficult for operators to meet them as they often did not have sufficient resources available.

It was obvious that a more 'durable' system was required so, in June 1940, forty dedicated Motor Coach Companies (MCCs) were established under the control of Royal Army Service Corps (RASC). Each Company consisted of three platoons of 20 coaches (18 operational and 2 in reserve). Hence, the full complement was 2400 vehicles. These were 'requisitioned' from their current owners who had little, or no, say in which vehicles were taken, although the Authorities preferred the more popular makes (e.g. AEC, Leyland, Dennis) and single-deck coaches rather than buses. There was, theoretically a procedure to be followed before vehicles were take but this was mainly ignored as the 'requisitioning officer' often walked into a depot and 'seized' what he fancied. A nominal value was allocated, and owners eventually received payment or, in some cases, the ultimate return of their asset.

Files in The National Archive exist for (most) MCCs covering the period from their formation in June 1940 until December 1941. (*there must be subsequent ones but I haven't found them yet!*) Their content varies from a single piece of paper to detailed weekly reports of all activities but common themes are the transient nature of the Companies (most were continually being relocated), the lack of any prior preparation

before their arrival and the (apparent) large amount of time spent by personnel doing very little!

On establishment, each Company collected its allocated vehicle from either a central location or the garages of individual operators. The first task was to undertake 'camouflage & disruption' followed by replacement of glass in the windows with either metal sheets (with portholes), hinged boards or heavy canvas sheets (although not all vehicles appear to have received this treatment). Army grey paint was then applied. All indications of original owners and registration were removed at this stage.

Often vehicles were found to be unserviceable and had to be worked on, but this presented problems as each Company had to arrange its own repairs and maintenance locally. Some initially used civilian bus company facilities, including Western Welsh and Thames Valley but this was soon prohibited; hence, smaller garages were resorted to. The files make it difficult to identify individual vehicles, although some reports are better than others in this respect, especially where 'unusual makes' are mentioned. Also, some of the locations are difficult to identify.



Above: A Camouflaged & 'disrupted' vehicle. Note the replacement of window glass with canvas screens (originally published in 'Bus & Coach')

Files exist for most of the 40 MCCs but substantial elements are missing from some. Many record details of day-to-day activities but as these rarely relate to the vehicles, only one example, relating to Number 3 Coach Company (see Appendix) indicates the nature of the content. It will be noted that the MCCs were constantly being re-located within the UK except the three based in Northern Ireland (nos 1, 2 & 3) as it would have been difficult and expensive to rotate these with the mainland.

Selected Extracts

These selected extracts (with their TNA file references) give a general indication of the vehicle related activities from formation until late 1942.

Motor Coach Company No 1 (WO 166/4991)
25/6/40 formed – coaches from various London & South coast operators
Camouflaged & ‘disrupted’ as much as time allowed
2/7/40 to Liverpool/Birkenhead/Belfast – based at Ballywilwill
Remained in Northern Ireland

Motor Coach Company No 3 (WO 166/4993)
Based at Markethill (NI)
Vehicles ex London & Portsmouth
2/7-5/7/40 Birkenhead to Belfast
See Appendix for full diary

Motor Coach Company No 5 (WO 166/4995)
Based at Aylesbury
12/7/40 18 coaches arrive – painting began immediately
13/7/40 16 more coaches
15/7/40 2 more
16/7/40 2 more
17/7/40 2 more
Balance made up of hired vehicles
Now in Saffron Walden

Maintenance by arrangement with Eastern Roadways, Bishops Stortford
28/7/40 5 more coaches
5/8/40 2 more
6/8/40 2 more
At Darlington in 1941
16/3/41 20 AEC coaches (with sliding roofs) to be exchanged with (28MCC) for 20 SOS coaches (no sliding roofs) – delayed until unit relocated to Cheltenham.

Motor Coach Company No 10 (WO 166/4999)
7/40 at Aldershot – 30 coaches sprayed, stencilled WD numbers on vehicles
27/7/40 instructions to cease using Southdown garage at Horsham as use had not been authorised.
1/41 at Chailey – still looking for a maintenance base
By4/41 at Crowborough

Motor Coach Company No 13 (WO 166/5002)
10/7/40 at Hammerwood Park with: 20 Tilling Stephens buses (ex Southdown); 30 Tilling Stephens; 10 Leyland Tiger buses. All dated from 1927-30 and were obtained without spares/tyres. Painted in camouflage paint
31/8/40 vehicles require constant maintenance & repair – now at Wadhurst
11/40 reported with 37 civilian coaches & drivers
5/41 20 vehicles sent to VRD, Slough

Motor Coach Company No 16 (WO 166/5005)
6/40 formed
10/7/40 coaches to be collected from Midland Red in Birmingham
16 collected plus further 44 – many unserviceable
17/7/40 all started!
6/8/40 replacement coaches – 5 from Leicester, Birmingham & Rugby – then sent to Slough?
30 prepared for VRD, Slough
7/8/40 35 ‘new’ coaches received (9 Leyland, 10 Albion, 16 Leyland)

All the files end by December 1941, as specialised 'personnel carriers' were gradually being substituted. However, it is known that (at least) some Companies still retained coaches into early 1942 as the following extracts from (other) files in TNA indicate.



Above: 'On Manoeuvres' (Imperial War Museum)

Use of Army coaches for civilian purposes (file MT55/250)

In November 1941, the War Office asked the Ministry of War Transport whether the use of Army coaches (with drivers) during December 1941 and January 1942 would be of any help for civilian transport. By the time the MOWT had asked the Regional Traffic Commissioners, who in turn asked operators and got replies, it was January 1942 before any vehicle started work.

South Wales

This report by the Regional Transport Commissioner (RTC) for Wales dated 7.1.42 sums it up:-

'The coaches commenced to operate on Monday last 5th (1942). The majority are being employed on workers services where additional transport facilities are required and others are being used in order to permit operators to overhaul their vehicles. This latter facility is greatly appreciated, as many operators have been unable to properly maintain their vehicles for some months. Operators have rendered every

assistance to this scheme and have welcomed the facilities, which it offers. They have also placed their available garage facilities at the disposal of the Repairs Officer of the Army unit and the whole of the arrangements have been very satisfactory.

It is expected that constructional work at several factories will decrease towards the end of March and this will then free vehicles for additional services, which will be required when production commences. If the Army coaches are withdrawn at the end of January, there will be difficulty in providing the necessary services and it should be pointed out that the vehicles which are now being overhauled by operators are unlikely to be ready for service at the end of the month owing to difficulty in obtaining spare parts and shortage of mechanics.

Weather conditions in this region during the next two months are likely to cause further difficulties in operating services, particularly in the Rhondda and similar valleys and the blackout period has already reduced the number of vehicles through accident. It is therefore hoped that this application for the extension of the period of loan, to the end of March will be approved.'

'The 11th Motor Coach Company are now in this region with a total of 51 coaches allocated as follows: - 16 at Pontypridd with Rhondda Transport Co.; 10 at Newport with Red & White, 9 at Bridgend with Western Welsh, 4 at Pembroke Dock with W&L Silcox, 4 at Carmarthen with Western Welsh, 4 at Trecwn with Western Welsh, and 4 at Haverfordwest with Green's Motors.

Yorkshire

Similar activities were being undertaken in Yorkshire as per this report from North East Regional Traffic Commissioner dated 9.1.42

'The scheme is now fully in operation and working satisfactorily and some temporary relief in transport problems has been effected. With regard to the period of loan, however, it is pointed out that the vehicles loaned to this region are all engaged on aerodrome construction services and that the workmen employed by contractors can work during the period of daylight only.

The West Yorkshire Road Car Co. and West Riding Automobile Co. have each one platoon of Army vehicles based at York and Castleford respectively and desire to retain the use of the vehicles for a period after 31st January 1942. It is, therefore, desired that you will raise the question of extending the period of loan with the War Office, as it is my view that until the period of daylight lengthens, the operators concerned will not be in a position to provide the services required from their own resources.

With regard to the vehicles based at Bridlington, a different consideration arises. These vehicles have been obtained in order to enable local operators to repair and re-condition their vehicles and the question as to whether the Army vehicles should be retained depends largely on the circumstances prevailing at the end of the month. It is hoped, however, that the local operators will have carried out the necessary repairs before the end of January, but in case there is any failure in this respect I would be glad if you would endeavour to obtain authority provisionally to extend the period of loan of the vehicles based at Bridlington. It will, of course, be possible to state nearer the time whether it is in fact actually necessary to retain the vehicles.

Army vehicles have arrived in Sheffield today and they will be put into service as soon as possible. It is anticipated that these vehicles will be required at least until the end of February and it is desired, therefore, that you will obtain

authority for their retention at Sheffield for a further period.

[There was also a note from the General Manager of Sheffield Corporation to the RTC stating that one platoon was being used on both contract and stage-carriage services with Corporation conductors. He had refitted two vehicles with windows and bell-pushes and wondered whether it was worth spending money on the others]



Above: Ex Standerwick 102 (RN 8251) AEC/Burlingham in service with Northern Ireland Transport Board complete with hardboard panels & slits instead of windows. (the late Brian Boyle)

Other locations

Elsewhere army buses are noted operating with Western SMT, Youngs, Glasgow Corporation, SMT, Bath, Trent, Derby Corporation, Potteries and Liverpool Corporation, amongst others. A Memo dated 4.3.42 says that coaches were allocated as follows: 20 for Royal Ordnance Factory, Aycliffe (internal transport), 80 for Yorkshire area, 15 for North Midlands area, 20 for Bristol Tramways [*This was actually Bath Tramways Motor Co.*], 50 for South Wales area, 40 for Potteries area, 24 for Liverpool and 60 for Scotland.

There is no information as to individual vehicle identities except that 1261321 was involved in an accident on 12.2.42 whilst working for Central SMT and two vehicles (L.12612LO & B.13521) of

21st Motor Coach Company, Western Command were involved in an accident in Stoke in February 1942 whilst en-route to ROF Swynnerton when one ran into the back of the other.

Further details (from non-TNA sources)

Commercial Motor magazine (03/04/1942) included an article on Motor Coach Companies, including a visit to a specific one, although actual dates & locations were not given in accordance with wartime restrictions. The general narrative stated that Motor Coach Companies are 'front-line troops' which remain in the combat zone to transport men; all drivers are fully qualified (including vehicle maintenance) & have military training. A Company is attached to a Brigade of Infantry & responsible for their transport; each Company has a workshop section with mobile equipment fully staffed with trained tradesmen.

Notes re the specific Company visited by CM explain it was operating under Northern Command, formed in summer 1940 from a unit that had returned from France; vehicles had been 'impressed' from civilian operators, inspected & reconditioned (as necessary). Once completed & drivers trained the Company took over work previously done by civilian operators. The fleet was mainly Leyland (the only 2 exceptions having been exchanged at early date) and mostly from southern operators (Maidstone, Luton, Bournemouth, Eastbourne). All were single-deck, built between 1926 & 1936 and are mainly luxury coaches, with interiors 'stripped' and window glass removed and replaced with canvas blinds. They are kept outside but inspected every two weeks.

At this date the MCC visited was deployed on non-military activities with their coaches supplementing civilian operators to Royal Ordnance Factories. Responsibility for these services rested with civilian operator who co-

ordinated RASC coaches and provided route-training and civilian inspectors at termini as required.

Disposal

Once the Army had no further use for the coaches they were sent to the Ministry of Supply for disposal. Many went on to serve Government departments, whilst others were offered back to their original owners. Those used in Northern Ireland were acquired by the Northern Ireland Road Transport Board who gradually renovated them back to civilian standard and later rebodied some as double-deckers.

Acknowledgements: TNA (file references as above), Alan Lambert, Commercial Motor Archive (online)

Photographs: Despite extensive efforts no 'new' pictures have been found to illustrate this article. The three used here have all been previously published (*The bodywork style of the 'disrupted' vehicle and that 'on Manoeuvres' suggests possible London Transport/Green Line origin. Have readers any views? Ed*)

Appendix

The following extracts are from a 'full log' for **No.3 Motor Coach Company**

- 25.6.40 No.3 Motor Coach Company RASC formed at Northleach.
- 29.6.40 2 parties proceeded to London and Portsmouth to(*illegible*) impressed vehicles for No.2 & No.7 Motor Coach Cos. Returned 2150.
- 2.7.40 Company moved in coaches of No.1 M.C.C. to Birkenhead Docks.
- 3.7.40 Embarked on 'City of Auckland' and 'Lycion'.
- 4.7.40 Sailed.
- 5.7.40 Docked Belfast. Arrived Gosford Castle, Market Hill.
- 7.7.40 Buses taken over by drivers and allotted to sections. Visit by CRASC 53rd division during which various problems and difficulties were discussed – lack

of workshop facilities, breakdown lorries, spare vehicles, spare petrol and transport for HQ section.

- 12.7.40 Noted that vehicles were not yet ready for road. Reserve tanker arrived.
- 13.7.40 All vehicles filled with petrol and arrangements completed for spray painting.
- 15.7.40 Painting of vehicles commenced.
- 18.7.40 Painting of vehicles continues.
- 20.7.40 Coach spraying proceeding.
- 22.7.40 Vehicles being prepared for 160 Infantry Brigade exercise.
- 23.7.40 Exercise.
- 25.7.40 Painting of coaches proceeding. Arrangements made with NIRTB for overhaul of vehicles.
- 26.7.40 First batch of vehicles sent for overhaul by NIRTB under special arrangements in various garages
Difficulty of parking increases daily owing to state of ground.
- 27.7.40 Overhaul of vehicles proceeding. Remainder on driving instruction. Vehicles also sent to workshops of Div. Arm., Pet. & Sup. Coys.on orders of CRASC.
- 30.7.40 No.1 section, No.2 Motor Coach Co. attached.
- 1.8.40 Coaches being overhauled in various garages and workshops.
- 2.8.40 Trade testing of drivers for Class III.
Overhaul and painting of vehicles proceeding. Trade Testing of drivers
- 5.8.40 Inspector of Motor Transport arrives and inspection of vehicles started.
- 6.8.40 All troops on vehicle maintenance. IMT continues inspection.
- 7.8.40 Training concentrated on vehicle maintenance.
- 13.8.40 Vehicle maintenance and painting of buses.
- 15.8.40 Visit by DCRE & GE to advise on hard-standing for vehicles in winter. Matter beyond their powers.
- 20.8.40 A section provides transport for 2 on Brigade exercise.
- 24.8.40-27.8.40 On exercise.
- 8.9.40 Company concentrated on disruptive painting of coaches.
- 9.9.40-11.9.40 Coach spraying.
- 15.9.40-16.9.40 On exercise.
- 17.9.40 8 vehicles sent to HRS for overhaul.
- 26.9.40 8 coaches from A section on exercise, training etc.
- 27.9.40 4 coaches brought from Ballyhinton & Armagh.
[due to constraints of space this text is curtailed from the above date – the full log continued to 1.2.41. Editor]

Not my Problem!

Roy Larkin

With the momentum towards mechanising the army, albeit slowly, steadily gaining pace, the town of Farnham, Surrey found itself on a collision course with the Government. Treasury files in the National Archives (T1/11657), while obviously incomplete, give some indication as to not only the costs of increasing military traffic but also the politics between different government departments and councils.

Farnham was a rural community close to Aldershot and stood in a direct line between Aldershot and Bordon, both of which were growing army towns. It was close to the artillery camp at Ewshot, and the common lands at Frensham and Thursley which were used for military exercises. Farnham inevitably found itself in the centre of the increasing military traffic.

Aldershot and Bordon councils were able to include the cost of road maintenance when calculating the rateable value of the military buildings in their area. Farnham had no military buildings and had only the local rates with which to maintain the roads, which were becoming increasingly expensive due to the increasing military traffic.

Farnham Urban District Council applied for a grant from the Government in 1888. It justified the application as it considered it unfair that the extra burden of maintaining the roads used by the military be borne by the local ratepayers. It was to be a further decade before the grant was awarded on 10 December 1898, although internal War Office correspondence dating from 1908 shows that was far from the end of the matter.

This delay appears to be while the Treasury and War Office argued over who was liable for the

payment of any grant. The Treasury argued that the grant should be paid by the War Office as the extra damage was caused by military vehicles. The War Office argued that the Treasury was liable as road maintenance was paid for from local rates. The War Office eventually won the argument and the grant was paid from public funds and not the military budget.

The grant was for £15 [£1,854 in 2017], paid annually but with the caveat that it was for damage caused by 'extraordinary' military traffic, with 'extraordinary' conveniently not defined. It was also intended only for the 2,040yds of road within the Farnham Urban District used by military traffic. At the same time a grant of £160 [£19,770] per annum was awarded to Farnham Rural District Council although there is no further mention of the Rural District Council until August 1914.

Increased military use

Boundary changes on 31 July 1901 increased the roads used by the military in the Farnham Urban District to 3,600yds which prompted the council to apply for an increase in their grant to £20 [£2,337] per annum in 1902. Hindsight may have given the council reason to rue this application for the Treasury decided that no more money would be paid from the public purse and it was entirely a War Office responsibility. Paying the agreed £15 annual grant appears to have simply stopped with the last payment in 1902.

The Council again approached the War Office in 1906. The War Office continued to argue against the principle of annual grants paid to councils in favour of compensation for road damage as it occurred and was proven to be caused by military traffic. This would allow the War Office to insist on roads of higher specification and more able to withstand the increasing military traffic. It was also argued that the small sum of

£15 p.a. was evidence that the increase in damage was so insignificant that it could not be considered relevant.

In January 1902, the War Office paid the Council £325 [£37,975]. This was for the 'extraordinary' damage caused by transporting huts as the garrisons at Aldershot and Bordon were increased.

In August 1905, £330 [£38,145] was awarded to the Council, as recommended in a report commissioned by the War Office of 25 April 1905 by Mr Humphreys, an independent surveyor and 'road expert'. This sum related to damage caused during 1903 and 1904 and it was noted that Mr Humphreys' assessment was considerably less than the Council's own surveyor. However, the Council only received £82.50 [£9,536] from the War Office.

The justification for the reduced payment was that it was the War Office contractors who were responsible for the balance. This was determined by noting that the Council's own surveyor had not distinguished between military and contractors' traffic. That the contractors were only there to carry out work on behalf of the War Office appears to have had no influence on the War Office as responsibility for the cost of repairs was apportioned.

This not only put the War Office at odds with the Council, but also its own contractors and in May 1907, the War Office relented and paid the Council £150 [£17,154] which left a shortfall of £97.50 [£11,095] from the original £330, of which there is no record of the Council receiving.

In November 1906, Colonel Glubb, Commanding Royal Engineers, Lands, Aldershot, visited the area to inspect the roads and meet with the Council's Officers. This resulted in Col Glubb recommending that the annual grant be increased

to £50 [£5,780]. While this may have caused some optimism in the Council, it appears to have held no sway at the War Office.

The War Office argument was that Col Glubb's recommendation was for maintaining the roads, which was entirely the responsibility of ratepayers. The War Office were only liable for strengthening the roads and Col Glubb's report showed that there was no need for the roads to be strengthened. The Council responded that the roads were only strong enough due to strengthening over the past seven years at the Council's expense. This appears to have been ignored by the War Office, although £60 [£6,862] was paid to the Council in April 1907, being the four years annual grant owing for the period from 1902 to 1906.

With the situation seemingly in a state of stalemate, the Council wrote to Major Gibbon, Colonel Glubb's successor detailing the Council's case on 24 August 1908. The response from Major Gibbon was dated 17 September 1908 and stated that the War Office could not agree with the Council's position. This caused the Council to write to the Treasury with a detailed 'statement of facts' as they saw it on 11 February 1909.

War Office policy

The War Office responded with a list of the Councils that had been paid up to 1908, including Farnham, Guildford, Hartley Wintney and Okehampton Hamlets, which had all been paid in accordance with the Treasury Directive of 10 December 1902. Furthermore, the similar situation with Frimley Urban District Council had been resolved on 30 June 1908 with a single payment of £5,000 [£571,808] in lieu of further claims for compensation. The War Office cited this as strengthening their case for single compensation payments in place of on-going annual maintenance payments.

With the Treasury now embroiled in the stalemate between the War Office and the Council, the War Office sought to strengthen its argument by obtaining legal opinion from the Army Council. This concluded, in June 1910, that 'extraordinary' had not been defined in 1902 so, along with other arguments, any claim by Farnham Council would not stand up in any court.

Also, although the traffic in the area had undoubtedly increased by a considerable amount, that this could be attributed to the growth of mechanical transport in general, of which the military traffic was only a component. It therefore followed that the cost of upkeep of the roads due to military traffic had fallen as civilian traffic increased. Surely only lawyers could invent the idea that more traffic is actually less because it had become a smaller proportion of the overall traffic.

There was also the legal duty of councils to maintain roads from the rates. As Farnham Council were claiming compensation for maintenance, not improvement, it became the responsibility of the ratepayers and not the military. It was also noted that Farnham Council claimed to need the money due to having no military buildings within its boundaries to charge rates upon. Despite this, and the increased cost of maintaining their roads, the Council had reduced the amount of the District Rate from 4 shillings in 1903 to 3/6d in 1908. This made the ability to raise income, or not, from rates on military buildings irrelevant.

A further consideration that had to be taken into account was that the increased military presence in the area was to the benefit of Farnham Council as it created additional trade and employment for the town. The Army Council therefore concluded that the system of annual payments should be halted and that arrangements for annual grants

with other councils should also be examined with a view to taking similar action.

In August 1914 agreement appears to have been reached that involved making annual payments to both the Urban and District Councils. This was to be determined by the degree of military use up to a maximum of £300 [£32,908]. The Treasury questioned this payment with the War Office in October 1914 on the grounds that the outbreak of war would probably greatly affect the military use of the roads in both the Rural and Urban Districts.

There is no further record after October 1914 and presumably the war ensured more important issues took priority for not only the Treasury and War Office but also the Farnham Councils.

Is tramway history repeating itself?

Recent technical press reports (for example, in 'Tramways & Urban Transit' November 2018), indicate that a major funding requirement may affect the Sheffield Supertram, opened in stages from 1992. The track and related infrastructure are now largely life-expired, requiring extensive replacement. However, while the system has broadly covered its operating costs (under a concession held by Stagecoach), renewal of rolling stock and fixed assets will become necessary when this ends in 2024. About £230 million is needed. In this respect tramways differ from bus operations (in which depreciation is charged for replacement of vehicles, workshop equipment, etc), and even the much-criticised Network Rail, whose costs include provision for replacement cost depreciation of most assets (apart from embankments, cuttings and tunnels) over a 30-year life.

Remarks made by Association member Ian Yearsley at our 1993 symposium 'The Rise and Fall of the Tram' (as reported in issue 5 of this

journal, January 1994) appear remarkably prescient in the light of this news. He noted that both the first-generation tramways and those opened from the early 1990s failed to make adequate provision for depreciation. Under the Municipal Tramway Association accounting policies adopted from 1904 depreciation was not included as such, giving a misleading picture of tramway profitability and the value of assets. Large sums were paid from tramway accounts to relief of rates rather than creating renewal funds in the years up to 1919. Additional loans had to be taken out to renew track laid in 1900 which became life-expired in 1920. He went on to suggest that '....a crisis similar to that of 1920 may occur around the year 2020'.

Peter White

Poor case for Aberystwyth - Carmarthen rail reopening

Arising from presentations at the April 2018 meeting (as reported in issue 92, May 2018), outcomes of the feasibility study for reopening this line are of interest. The Mott MacDonald consultancy examined this issue on behalf of the Welsh Government. An executive summary produced by Transport for Wales (TfW) indicates that the capital cost (including the Treasury's 'optimism bias' component) would be £775 million. Although the scheme is technically feasible (subject to some specific local factors), the economic case is clearly very weak, due to the low density of demand in the area concerned, with a benefit-cost ratio of only 0.43 (a ratio of at least 1.0 is needed to justify any scheme, and typically the DfT looks to much higher ratios than this). Whilst there would be some user benefits, with an end-to-end journey time of about 85 minutes, compared with two hours by TrawsCymru bus, the number of such passengers would be very small. The executive summary (and fuller report) available at <http://tinyurl.com/yax8b7rs>.

Peter White

An historical perspective on the Future of Mobility

The Government Office for Science has recently sponsored extensive research on the Future of Mobility, which was made available at the end of January. The main issues are covered in a comprehensive overview report, which includes a section 'A brief history of the UK Transport System' as its opening chapter. This is in contrast to many such exercises, which normally project forward from only a limited period, giving a longer perspective. All of the subjects examined in the main report are also documented in greater depth in separate evidence reviews, including the paper 'The history of transport systems in the UK' by Professor Simon Gunn of the Centre for Urban History at the University of Lancaster.

It looks back over the last on hundred years (from the end of World War One), seeing 'the winners' as automobile and air travel, with declines in other modes, albeit reversed by recent growth in rail passenger travel and sea freight. Four main 'drivers of change' are identified, such as consumer demand and technological innovation. Walking and cycling receive due coverage, as well as mechanised transport. The mismatch between growth in vehicular traffic, and supporting infrastructure is highlighted, likewise for aviation. The author concludes by suggesting that transport history does not progress in a linear fashion, but may include 'surprising reversals and survivals' (the return of tramway and light rail systems in some cities is cited earlier in the text): 'The transport alternatives of the past are thus more than interesting relics'.

The overall report, along with the evidence reviews, may be accessed by going to www.gov.uk/dft, then typing 'Future of Mobility' in the 'search' box.

Other evidence reviews related to road transport include:

- 'The private road transport system' [private car] by Dr Marc Stettler of Imperial College
- 'The public road transport system' [bus and coach] by the editor of this journal.
- 'Governance of UK Transport Infrastructures' by G.Marsden and I.Docherty (and 'Technical Annex' thereto, by numerous authors)
- 'Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles' by M.Enoch
- 'Understanding the UK Freight Transport System' by MDS Transmodal

Peter White

Book Reviews

Robert Davidson Pioneer of Electric Locomotion *Dr Antony Anderson*. 35 x 200 mm, portrait, soft covers. 161 pages. 37 illustrations plus extensive supporting notes. Published by The Grampian Transport Museum, Montgarrie Road, Alford, Aberdeenshire AB33 8AE. Cover price £9.99 +£1.99 for post and packing. ISBN: 978 1 5272 2014 0 [Review by Ian Souter]

It is not unknown for new discoveries in technology to be developed in parallel by pioneers quite unknown to each other. It is also the case that the pioneers can hit upon a concept which was later transformational to society, but which did not progress at the time because an input critical to later success was missing. Such was the fate of Robert Davidson of Aberdeen (1804 – 1894) who, in the late 1830s/early 1840s, produced with the resources available to him locally a variety of working electric motors and the galvanic batteries to power them. By the late 1830s Davidson was a successful industrial chemist who had taken to studying electromagnetism as a past time. To Davidson must go the credit for having made a working

battery car capable of carrying two people in 1839. Some 180 years later the battery car still awaits universal acceptance.

This little volume is a biography of Davidson and his work, a work that ultimately saw him acclaimed as “the Nestor of the art of electric traction”. This is a well-researched and readable account of the influences which led Davidson to this field of study, but also serves as a case study of the fraught process of converting a good idea into a commercial success. Dr Anderson conducts the reader through:

Davidson’s early education and life experience, including his ad hoc university attendance at Marischal College, Aberdeen, and the indirect contribution of the Glendronach distillery, the expansion of scientific knowledge in electromagnetism up to the 1840s, the known and possible exchanges between Davidson and others in the field of electromagnetism, Davidson’s battery electric locomotive of 1842 for the Edinburgh & Glasgow Railway Company, Davidson’s venture to the Egyptian Hall, London to exhibit his motors, and Outlines of some other early attempts to apply electromagnetism to wheeled vehicles.

The London exhibition was only a qualified success. Whilst it covered its costs, it failed to attract financial sponsorship to invest in his ideas, the leading scientists of the day having mixed feelings about any potential in what he was offering. He returned to Aberdeen to his various commercial enterprises and had no further involvement with electromagnetism or electric traction. However, in the twilight of his years he was remembered by the fast developing electric traction industry, initially in the USA in 1890.

Finally, it may be of interest to know that in conjunction with the publication of this book,

Grampian Transport Museum have built a working replica of a Davidson electric motor.

Selling lorries – the early 1950s. A look at how lorries and vans were advertised in the trade press of the period. Issue 21 of the ‘Road Haulage Archive’ edited and compiled by *Malcolm Bates*. Kelsey Publishing www.kelsey.co.uk, 97pp, 2018, £7.95. ISBN 978 1 912151 08 0. [Review by Richard Storey]

Not only lorries: passenger vehicles, ambulances, and trailers also feature in this fascinating compilation. Each reproduced advertisement is accompanied by a long informative caption, often including amusing but relevant comments, and presented in a readily identifiable format. Allow ample time to read and absorb the informative and thought-provoking contents of this issue in the ‘Road Haulage Archive’ series, which as a ‘bookazine’ should be available in newsagents.

Steam Traction on The Road: From Trevithick to Sentinel: 150 Years of Design and Development. *Anthony Burton*. 2018. Pen & Sword Books Ltd; 47 Church Street, Barnsley S70 2AS. www.pen-and-sword.co.uk ISBN 978-1-52670-151-0. 200 pp, including many illustrations, some in colour. £25.00 [Review by Rod Ashley]

Arranged in eleven logical chapters, this book provides a fascinating and well-structured, mostly chronological account of the development of road-based steam vehicles.

From the early days of Trevithick to the stiff competition between road steamers and their railway competitors, through to agricultural vehicles and even sports cars, the treatment is thorough and absorbing. In particular, the focus on steam’s suitability for fairground vehicles is fascinating and, throughout, high quality

illustrations and photos enhance the text.

Many vehicle manufacturers mentioned are well-known, even if their dalliance with steam power was temporary. Apart from leading steam-only manufacturers like Stanley and Sentinel, other manufacturers feature for their experimentation and development of steam-driven vehicles – such as truck manufacturers Foden, agricultural machinery manufacturers like Case and McCormick (International Harvester), traction engine and road roller manufacturers Aveling and Fowler, and trailer manufacturers Crane (now Fruehauf).

The author identifies clearly the compelling reasons for the development of steam power eclipsing horse-power, outlining some of the ground-breaking design features which helped to overcome the limitations of the motive power – such as the heavy weight, the need for small front wheels to facilitate steering, and the various designs of boiler. The detail is well-judged – sufficient to make sense without over-burdening the reader with too much technicality. As a result, the author wears his knowledge lightly and with appropriate humour – such as noting

Below: an illustration from the book, showing the Doble E22 steam car of 1925



Above: An illustration from the book, showing a Sentinel lorry.

that on one freight route to Scotland, traction engine breakdowns tended to occur within ‘a hundred yards or so of the Snake Inn’.

Several brands stand out: the streamlined shape of Sentinel steam trucks (still seen at steam fairs) and made under licence by Skoda; the sleek and fast Doble E22 of 1925 (capable of 100+ mph and able to raise steam in under a minute) and, of course, the inveterate Stanley Steamer. The Stanley twins manufactured cars which, to a casual eye, looked like internal combustion-powered cars (it is a little easier to mask the steam workings given the larger scale of US cars compared to European brands). I recall seeing several magnificent specimens in the grounds of the eponymous Stanley Hotel in Estes Park in the Colorado Rockies – a stunning hotel which was the inspiration for Stephen King’s novel *The Shining* and its later film.

Ultimately, the limitations of steam power and the demise of the genre are deftly accounted for. But in an age when alternatives to fossil-fuels are keenly researched, this well-produced book is a timely reminder of the ingenuity of vehicle inventors and designers.

The Motorway Age: How post-war governments responded to rapid traffic growth *David Starkie*
Second edition January 2019, 186pp paperback,
36 b+w illustrations. Riverside Publishing
Solutions, Salisbury
www.riversidepublishingsolutions.com. ISBN
978-1-9995853-7-2. £8.99 [Review by Peter
White]

This volume is the second edition of a book first published in 1982. Coverage has been extended to 1986, covering a period of 40 years from a starting date of 1946 when the first post-war plan for motorways was produced (the 'tea room plan' displayed in the House of Commons). Hence it now comprises part of transport history. The coverage is wider than that of motorways alone, although they form a major part of the book, and includes many other policy issues related to the growth of traffic, including urban roads, lorry size and routeing, traffic management, and parking policy.

It is clear that much of the motorway network planning predated the economic evaluation methods developed in the 1960s and now widely adopted. While the main flows were readily identifiable in any case, some oddities resulted from political decisions, notably that to prioritise the Forth crossing over that of the Severn, despite the latter having a stronger economic case. The curiosity of the M50 'Ross Spur' motorway, built as a means of providing an early motorway toward Wales, is thus explained, and the particularly dense motorway network in Lancashire can be attributed to the efforts of the County Surveyor James Drake.

A fair account is given both of proponents and opponents of various policies, including the motorway network development itself, urban road schemes, and traffic restraint. The issue of coping with anticipated growth of car traffic within urban areas is covered comprehensively, including the Buchanan report on cars and urban

planning, and the Smeed report on road pricing. The shift to control of parking supply - initially on-street and later total capacity - is also reviewed. A conflict emerges between improvement of interurban roads and providing equivalent capacity within urban areas. The role of traffic management in expanding road capacity in the 1950s and 1960s is documented, illustrating the scope for offsetting some of the expected effects of car usage growth on speeds. However, it should be noted that capacity was increased in terms of vehicular movement, but not necessarily that of persons (reference is made to removal of tramways in London permitting greater vehicular capacity, but not the change in person movement as such).

Concluding chapters review overall issues, including whether motorway development stimulated economic activity and regional regeneration (the evidence for which is surprisingly thin), the similarities in policies adopted by both main parties, and the long-term role of the civil service. Although a 1986 cut-off is adopted, one wonders whether it might have been useful to evaluate some developments since then, especially the extent to which they illustrate some issues discussed earlier. For example, the experience of congestion charging in London since 2003 provides a test of the concept of road pricing, which was only theoretical at the time of the Smeed report. One might also speculate whether history is in some respects repeating itself, with funding now being provided for interurban road capacity growth, without corresponding capacity or traffic restraint measures within the urban areas which they connect.

The written style is a readily accessible one. The form of publishing adopted enables a very reasonable price to be set, in contrast to many books from traditional academic publishers, making it affordable to a wide readership.

The Roads and Road Transport History Association Limited
Notification of Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the company will be held on Saturday, 6th April 2019 at the Coventry Transport Museum, Millennium Place, Hales Street, Coventry, CV1 1JD, commencing at 11.00am.

If any members have items to be included in the agenda, they should notify the undersigned by Friday 22nd March 2019.

Election of Directors

As per our Articles of Association, two directors come up for re-election at the AGM: Amy Graham, David Holding. Both have offered to serve for a further three-year term. If any other members would like to offer themselves to serve as a director, they should write to the undersigned by 22nd March 2019, including details of a nominator and seconder both of whom should be existing members.

Anyone requiring more details about these vacancies should contact the undersigned.

AGM Papers

The agenda, accounts for the year ended 31st December 2018 and minutes of the last AGM will be available at the AGM. If any members would like these sent to them in advance, please contact the undersigned.

Please note that there is no charge to attend the Annual General Meeting.

Philip Kirk

Membership Renewals

A big 'thank you' to everyone who has renewed their membership promptly – around two thirds of members had done this by the end of January. This helps our small volunteer team tremendously. For those who have not renewed, there is a final reminder enclosed. Please now renew promptly – we don't want to lose you!

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Trinity St David for which the Association is most grateful.

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