

ROADS AND ROAD TRANSPORT

HISTORY CONFERENCE NEWSLETTER

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Aylesbury, 1932 (see page 15)

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CONFERENCE MATTERS

February 19th 2000

AGM 2000

The 2000 Annual General Meeting was held at the Museum of British Road Transport Coventry on 19th February. Chairman Professor John Hibbs opened the proceedings by reviewing the success of the 1999 Symposium, which had recruited new members and enhanced the reputation of the Conference.

The Hon. Secretary reviewed the numbers enrolled at the end of 1999, and expressed our continued thanks to the MBRT - highlighting the central location, good facilities and warm welcome which made it the perfect venue for our twice yearly meetings and other occasional events. In recognition of this, Conference had granted free corporate membership to the Museum. Gordon Knowles also expressed his thanks to the Minutes Secretary, Gordon Mustoe, for all his hard work.

The Hon. Treasurer presented his annual accounts, drawing attention to the narrow margin between income and expenses for the Symposium, and drawing the conclusion that the attendance fee for future symposia should be increased. The attribution of certain expenses to the *Companion to British Road Transport* was questioned by Professor Armstrong, and it was resolved that the expenditure in question be shown under a different heading as it had arisen for a reason peripheral to the *Companion*, though in the interests of the Conference and its aims.

The amendment was made, and the accounts were duly examined (by Messrs Bevin and Newman) and will be supplied in their revised form to all members not present at the meeting.

The Hon. Editor reported that the process of producing the Newsletter was now working well, and the quality of reproduction was highly satisfactory. It would, finance permitting, be possible to move to "quarterly" publication, although dates of publication would probably be February, May-June, September and October-November to coincide with the meetings of the Conference. At present, there was no shortage of material for publication.

In reply to this, the Hon. Treasurer referred to the replies that he had received in answer to a circular he had sent members likely to attend the AGM, concerning their interests. Some felt that, with a small increase in the annual subscription, the Conference could offer a better service to those members who were not able to attend meetings. It was resolved, therefore, after this matter had been publicised to all members, that it would be proper at the next meeting

to debate this issue further, so that a resolution could then be made at the AGM in 2001. Possible rates would be £10 (Associate Membership) and £30 (Corporate Membership). In connection with the suggestion of improved service, one member suggested that *Newsletter* might carry a Question & Answer section.

The Hon Research Coordinator was pleased to say that historical research was alive and well. The National Tramway Museum has now put its index to 20 Journals on the Internet, and has a regularly updated website. The Light Rail Transit Association had recently held a discussion regarding the future of the *Tramway Review*, and it had been opined that "we were running out of tramway history". The Hon Research Coordinator, our Chairman and the NTM were among many who had written to condemn this view. It may be true that the generation of writers that had written about tramways, and whose main motivation had been nostalgia, has come to an end, but there are plenty of subjects not yet touched and many aspects of tramways and their relationship with other forms of transport that have not been written about. (see page 6)

This was followed by a general discussion on the importance of the Internet, the need for museums and other bodies interested in matters historical to make their material compatible, and how the Internet was boosting research. This led on to questions as to how the Conference should embrace the Internet as a tool for encouraging research.

The formal agenda was brought to an end with the unanimous re-election of the society's officers, and a vote of thanks, proposed by Peter Jaques, to the officers as well as to the examiners of the accounts.

Roger Atkinson headed those wishing to speak under *any other business* with a review of opinions gathered from his limited circulation letter concerning members' interests. These (not surprisingly) varied considerably - some welcomed the idea, others were less concerned, and others declared their interests to be more "general" than "particular". Various members spoke from the floor on the list of interests drawn up by Roger, and warned against the idea of members being thought of as "expert in", when the truth was more probably "interested in". It was felt undesirable to publish the names of other societies to which our membership belonged. Grahame Boyes and others felt that it might be best if members' interests were expressed in their own words, rather than by ticking boxes, and he and others made it clear that "research interests" differs from just "interests". Roger is to take action on this issue. The AGM came to an end at 12.35 pm.

The date fixed for the next Business Meeting is Saturday 16th September 2000 (at Coventry)

17th BUSINESS MEETING

The AGM was immediately followed by the Business Meeting. John Hibbs reported on the efforts of the working party set up to preserve the collection of journals held by the Chartered Institute of Transport. At the present time it was clear that these documents had been recognised as important, and it had been established that they would be preserved "in London". The issue of the CIT archive list of members of the CIT from 1919 onwards was raised, and John Hibbs promised to look into the present whereabouts and availability of that list.

He went on to discuss an issue arising from a meeting he had attended at Road Haulage Association headquarters with Stephen Norris. This concerned a suitable place for RHA members to deposit archives should they so wish. Grahame Boyes felt that there was a need for hauliers records to be preserved, and it was suggested that if the RHA have a house journal, perhaps some note might appear therein with guide lines. Local county or city archives are suitable repositories. John Hibbs raised the problems faced by some archives which contained items other than paper records. Not all repositories have the means or space to preserve artifacts.

Mention was made of a preservation project being undertaken by an associate member, John Birks. He is restoring a rare side-engined Northern General bus, CU 6100, an SE4 which was at one time kept at Beamish. John hopes to address Conference on his restoration project at a future date, and in the meantime seeks historical information on this type of vehicle.

Before adjourning for lunch, there was a brief discussion on improved computerised catalogueing at the Public Record Office, and the need for an alphabetical list of company records (File BT31). Some doubt was expressed that there was a second file listing companies whose files had been destroyed.

The meeting resumed at 2 pm. Professor John Armstrong was pleased to announce that the date of publication of the proposed *Companion* was 2002, and that a contract had been signed with the Science Museum. Although a number of entries had been submitted, more writers were still needed, and there were still subjects without an author. A list was available on request from Professor Armstrong.

John Hibbs undertook to do the necessary negotiations with Kevin Hey and Salford University to organise a Symposium, on 21st October 2000, at Coventry, on the inter-war period (particularly the work of the Traffic Commissioners). A firm announcement appears opposite.

(this item continued on page 4)

R & RTHC SYMPOSIUM 2000

in association with
UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD
European Studies Research Institute
Centre for Contemporary History
and Politics

at
Museum of British Road Transport
Coventry
on 21st October 2000
10.30 - 16.00

"Lessons from History for Transport Policy & Practice 1919-1939"

Speakers

Professor John Hibbs

Revd Dr. R. J. Buckley

Kevin Hey

Dr. Martin Higginson

T.B. Maund

The speakers will address such topics as competition between modes (bus, tram, cars), the regulation of the road passenger transport industry and the unforeseen consequences of regulation.

Enrolment forms will be
available with this newsletter

Following the end of business, we heard three presentations. The first was by Roger de Boer, on the subject of motor bus transport on the island of Ameland, the fourth island in an archipelago stretching north as an extension of the coastline of Holland. This island was linked to the mainland by a ferry, which called at the port of Ness, and this was in turn linked to the three other villages of the island by roads.

Roger revealed that the early history of bus operation had been gathered by him from a letter he received in 1963. It seems the first to introduce mechanical transport for passengers was the owner of the Swan Hotel, who purchased a Spyker ambulance (war surplus) in 1922. As he was no mechanic, he found it difficult to keep on the road, and he was upstaged by a rival, Fischer, and gave up bus operation after only nine months. The rival's success encouraged others to enter the motor transport business, but by 1930, after a fare cutting war, the bus operators joined forces as Fischer Ridder & Co. The first vehicles after the Spyker were Ford model T types, a product, Roger reminded us, of the man who declared history to be bunk. There is an irony in the fact that Ford's early vehicles are now history themselves, and were in many places the first type of mechanised transport used by haulage and omnibus firms.

The buses of the thirties were slightly larger models, and included a Chevrolet 15 seater and a GMC 25 seater. The island was occupied by German forces from 1940, and various ruses were adopted to prevent the loss of the vehicles to the enemy. After the War, there were a number of British bus chassis placed in service (under the Marshall plan) and two independents continued to provide passenger services. The fleets included a Bedford OB, two Bedford OWLs, (bodied by Jongerius of Utrecht) a Seddon with a LABO body and a Guy Vixen with a Hainje body. The deaths of the owners in the sixties, one from lung cancer, the other from alcoholic poisoning, saw the arrival of a bus company from the mainland (one of the Netherlands Railway 'daughter' companies - the Dutch equivalent of the Tilling Group in BTC days). So passed into history a colourful period of independent bus operation on Ameland.....for example, one of the owners was known to issue tea tickets to his passengers.

This presentation drew warm applause from the audience, and many recalled the idiosyncrasies of bus operation on islands such as Jersey, Guernsey, the Scillies, Arran, etc. On Jersey, the Jersey Railways & Tramways never ran trams, and after the closure of the rail service buses continued to use a timetable. On Guernsey, the Guernsey Railway never ran trains, and tickets were issued to passengers when

they left the bus. (It was pointed out that many islands around the shores of Britain were not affected by the Road Traffic Act of 1931. This led to an unusual situation arising in Guernsey, when in the eighties the private bus company collapsed, and the island was left with no form of public transport until the States (the island government) was forced to do something.) Of course, eccentric bus operators were not solely confined to islands, as John Hibbs pointed out with the tale of a Suffolk bus driver who collected fares in a pudding basin, except when the Traffic Inspectors were known to be about, when he issued tickets from a rack. These were then collected from passengers when they alighted for further use.

Ron Phillips then raised the topic of how one should think carefully about the future disposal of one's collection, and make one's wishes known, either formally or informally. It is a sad fact that families are not always sympathetic to the existence of a collection, nor the fact that the value of a collection may not be monetary. Having said that, there are a number of instances where pecuniary reasons have influenced the disposal of an important collection.

A discussion followed, and one important point that was made is that any bequest to a society or a public body should be discussed with the society or body, so that the desires of the collection's owner may be met. It was the feeling of the meeting that most like to think that their collections will not be broken up when they are given to societies, but do not seem to realise that many societies do dispose of duplicate items. Some libraries are known to accept items only on the condition that cataloguing fees be paid.

It was made clear by several members that the contents of a collection will contain both common (books and publications, generally) and unique items. It is the latter which need careful thought, and are best deposited with a body which is likely to remain in existence for the foreseeable future. (The uncertain future of the CIT Library was mentioned at this point.)

This is a subject which may well be taken up again, and we may consider publishing some general guide lines.

The third presentation was by John Hibbs, who examined the interesting subject of how certain railway branch lines in eastern England were replaced by bus services, and how much or how little effort was made to co-ordinate bus and railway timetables. He compared the fate of various routes: one thing which became apparent was there was little effort made to enforce a uniform pattern on the replacing services. We hope to publish an illustrated version of John's talk in a future *Newsletter*, as the subject is too detailed and to be summarised effectively in this report.

GIBRALTAR

"Key to the Mediterranean"

There is a daily ceremony in Gibraltar, when keys are handed over.....a reminder of the times when it was a military garrison guarding the entry into the Mediterranean. In the fifties, when the items illustrated on this page were current, it was the "key" which turned on the flow of tourists into the south of Spain, and which first brought tourism to such as Torremolinos and the Costa del Sol. The link was by road, tourists flying into Gibraltar and being taken by luxury coach or by hire car into Spain.

The trade dates from earlier times, the twenties and early thirties, but it was interrupted by the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War. By the mid-fifties airliners such as the de Havilland Comet began to make air travel more accessible, and the two main tour operators in Gibraltar enjoyed their

Golden Age, which was to last until the frontier with Spain was closed by General Franco's government in 1966. One effect of this was to divert the by then substantial holiday traffic to Spanish airports.

L. Francis, trading as Gibraltar Motorways (a bus company) or Gibraltar Motor Hire Service (the car hire business) ran a fleet of coaches, and even had an AEC Regal IV coach running a Gibraltar - London service. His vehicles used to take tourists into Spain were Leyland Tigers, some with Burlingham bodies. He also had some less luxurious buses for use on local services on the Rock.

M.H.Bland was a local travel agent, who organised airport transfers at quite a substantial rate. The 2/- ticket seen below has to be compared with the 1d. fare charged on the bus. It must be assumed that the 2/- fare entitled the passenger and his luggage to transport at any time by taxi.

Tickets are from the collections of Roger Atkinson and Ron Phillips.

(To be Continued)



Left: A pictorial boarding card for a flight from Gibraltar Airport. The planes did indeed land close to the Rock, on the runway built out into the sea.

Below Left: A paper coupon issued by the M. H. Bland travel agency

Below: A Bell Punch ticket from the Gibraltar Motorways local bus service, on mustard yellow paper. The two titles used by L. Francis appear on the front, (buses) and the back (hire cars and motor garage business)

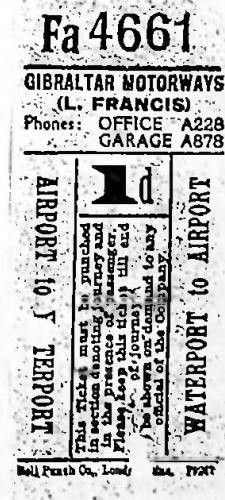
M. H. BLAND & Co. Ltd. No 000593
MOTOR TRANSPORT

VALID FOR ONE JOURNEY

TOWN TERMINAL - AIRPORT
OR
AIRPORT - TOWN TERMINAL

FARE: TWO SHILLINGS

To be shown on demand to any official of the Company.



THE GIBRALTAR MOTOR HIRE SERVICE.

Agents for

VELOCETTE MOTOR CYCLES

20 things that need doing

A summary of the talk given by Ian Yearsley at the R&KTHC Symposium
October 1999

This presentation took shape when I was at the National Tramway Museum Library at Crich, doing some research. There is some sort of history written and published about the vast majority of the tramway undertakings in this country, and about most of the manufacturers of vehicles..... but these historical accounts vary considerably in quality, and most of them deal with things that happened, without really going into the question of *why* they happened: what were the political and financial and legislative pressures: what were the assumptions people made: how did the ideas move from one place to another ?

And so a picture began to emerge, not only of the history that had been recorded, but the history that needed to be recorded. I have tried to expand this from my own discipline of tramway history to that of buses and trolleybuses, and even to that of road freight transport. The 20 items which follow include a lot of questions regarding the trolleybus. I am indebted for these to Dr. Tebb of *FirstBus*. Bob Tebb probably has a better overview of trolleybus history than anyone in this country, and his questions will be ones that need researching and answering.

Some of the questions I have put are about establishing facts. Item One is about who ran the first horse drawn omnibus in this country. At the recent Coach & Bus Show at NEC, Birmingham, one exhibitor had an historical display which alleged quite unequivocally that John Greenwood of Pendleton, near Manchester, ran the first horse bus in 1824. People in the south will tell you that Shillibeer ran the first horse bus in 1829. The problem is that all the evidence for Greenwood is in the form of letters written years later, with people recalling that in 1824 (some say 1825) he ran his first bus. What is needed here is for someone to go to Salford and Manchester and make an exhaustive search for contemporary evidence of Greenwood's claim.

Enthusiast-written publications give a lot of detail about what happened, but often fail to ask and answer the question *why* it happened. Two books on

Bradford Tramways were produced, but only with the latest, by Stan King, do we learn the political and financial background to the way the system was developed and run down.

Item 20 on British Coachways, is about why this organisation of independent operators fell to pieces so easily in the face of competition from National Express. Here again, there is a book which tells you what happened, but not *why*.

I have even included hand-carts. Hand pushed or pulled vehicles figure in a great many photographs, especially pre-1914, and statistics are somewhat scanty. Here is a piece of transport history to be researched and written about.

Some other questions are about things which affected the industry. The disposal of the military vehicles after the First World War, for instance. Not only did this set some people up in business, but it was a threat to the stability of the makers of new ones.

Two other items relate to the Second World War. The saga of producer gas needs putting on record. Why, despite so much research, was all that emerged something which people were glad to see the back of? There's also a question about the blackout. The trade press makes it clear that interpretation of rules was by no means uniform and local chief constables applied their own rules. In 1940 Cleethorpes buses did not run at all after dark, which suggests a somewhat draconian interpretation locally. Another problem with wartime history is the censorship. At the time of the blitz in Coventry, I remember a national magazine announcing that a meeting there had been cancelled "because of the inclement weather." Some places produced a "Now it can be told" report in 1945, telling of all the things the censor had forbidden them to say in wartime.

Number 16 raises the question of the bus and coach dealers who played an enormous part in the industry, and are scarcely even mentioned by historians. One might also mention the part played by scrap dealers in recycling equipment, such as Devey & Co. of Birmingham (later of Lichfield) who provided motors from Bournemouth to speed up Liverpool trams in the 1930s. Paul Sykes, in the bus world, would have similar tales to tell if anyone were prepared to go and record it. The multi-franchise dealer, by the way, is a peculiarly British institution. In the early 1980s, when I was Bus and Coach editor of *Motor Transport*. I would quite often be invited to lunch by foreign manufacturers wanting to get into the UK bus market, and I would always wait till the dessert course before I broached the subject of multi-franchise dealers, because that was the point at which they would start to hold their head in their hands and wish they hadn't come. But I always made sure I got

my pudding on my plate first.

Legislation and government reports are a fruitful field for research: I have mentioned the Salter Conference report of 1932 which was about freight transport: why did the passenger industry get into such a panic about it? Why did orders for trolleybuses dry up for six months, and why did Preston seriously consider rescinding its tramway abandonment scheme?

Read the following items and consider not only the points raised but the similar points which apply to your own particular field of research. These items are only the beginning of the story, it is now up to you to begin to write!

1

Who was the first horse bus operator in Great Britain? Was it John Greenwood in Pendleton in 1824 or Shillibeer in London in 1829?

The are post 1824 anecdotal reports of Greenwood; research is needed to find some contemporary evidence to support his claim.

2

Disposal of some 20,000 military vehicles in 1920 gave many people a start in the bus and haulage business. However, it caused serious problems for the manufacturing industry which was trying to develop and sell new designs. Both sides of this story need researching and relating to one another.

3

How far was the need to use up residual life (and/or unexpired loan life) in power and overhead line equipment a factor influencing conversions from tram to trolleybus in the 1930s?

Was it the end of the equipment's useful life, as well as power supply nationalisation, that brought about the end of trolleybus operation in many places, particularly post war?

4

The 1932 Salter Conference report, though almost entirely concerned with road freight, caused alarm in the passenger industry.(orders for trolleybuses were halted in fear of taxation). How realistic were these fears, and why did the panic arise?

5

What was the effect of unemployment and the recession from 1929 onwards on municipal passenger transport policies? Is there a correlation between areas of high unemployment (e.g. Rochdale and Jarrow) and early tramway abandonment?

6

Petrol and diesel driven buses were intended to have a relatively short life. Thus as technological

developments occurred, they could be introduced on the replacing vehicles. Trolleybuses, by contrast, were expected to have up to a 50% longer life, so that the chance to introduce technological change was more limited. Did this slow turnover in products cause suppliers themselves to abandon technical development in trolleybuses and their infrastructure, because of the lack of potential returns? In turn did this generate technological stagnation in the trolley system, evident from the mid-thirties onwards?

7

Is there any correlation between tramway undertakings which built up renewal funds from the mid-twenties onwards, and those which survived longest with tramway operation into the 1940s and 1950s?

8

Trolleybus *fuel* was bought locally from local producers, sometimes in the same ownership as the operators, sometimes not. Tariff structures were often based on maximum demand pricing rather than on units consumed. To what extent did local authority departmental profiteering and/or the inability to know the fuel price until well after it was used damage the economics of trolleybus operation? Did the nationalisation of the power supply industry help or hinder trolleybus economics?

9

Second World War blackout regulations changed several times and there were marked differences in local interpretation, especially on the East and South Coasts. Research is needed on the effects this had on the passenger transport industry, using post-war "Now it can be told" censor-free reports as well as contemporary statements.

10

The trolleybus had a very small number of very active champions of its potential, but little general support. Did the (extreme?) enthusiasm of this small band of champions actually work against the mode as they were perceived more as a "cranky" or "lunatic fringe" rather than as serious mainstream advocates of a public transport mode? Were there insufficient enthusiasts for the mode for their voice to be noticed?

11

The bus fuel allocations in the 1939-45 war were based on consumption levels in summer 1938. This put at a disadvantage those undertakings which had carried out extensive conversions from trams during 1939. How did they cope?

12

When the trolleybus first appeared in any quantity, general traffic speeds were low and general vehicle performance was poor. As vehicle performance improved with time, the capability of the trolley vehicle followed suit. However, the overhead line equipment, having a substantially longer life than that of the vehicle, was not improved or developed to match the vehicle's capability. To what extent did this lack of OHL development fossilise the performance capability of trolleybus systems? (This includes average journey times and the number of vehicles required for given levels of service.)

13

To what extent did the Traffic Commissioners exceed their powers in refusing to grant Road Service Licences to independent operators where these would conflict with large territorial operators? Would "grandfather rights" in the 1930 Road Traffic Act have produced a notably different pattern of services? (1)

14

American tramway manufacturers such as Westinghouse and Thomson-Houston established British manufacturing companies to exploit the market here. It has been claimed that their real aim was the much greater prize of main line railway electrification. Did American giant J.G.Brill, which had earmarked a site for a British plant, realise that railway electrification was not imminent, and so licensed other makers to build its truck and bogie designs?

15

Development of the motor bus was rigidly controlled by the Ministry of Transport through the Construction and Use Regulations and its vehicle inspectorate. In contrast the trolleybus was under the control of the Railways Inspectorate, which adopted a more flexible approach to the design features of vehicles. This led to early though limited use of 8ft. wide vehicles, flashing trafficators and contraflow bus lanes, but only in specific towns or on specific vehicles.

Did this very flexibility, and thus lack of standardisation, contribute to the decline of the trolleybus as an option, as potential users were unable to identify clearly its specific features?

16

The multi-franchise bus and coach dealer or distributor, a peculiarly British institution, had a special role in marrying available chassis production to available bodies, as well as providing vehicles for the second-hand market.

Has anyone written a history of dealerships, discussing also the arrival of single manufacturers dealers and the effects of auction sales on vehicle disposals? (2)

17

Parcels services by tram and bus developed up to the Second World War and declined or were hived off after it. There is a need for a study of this aspect, looking at possible cross subsidies, links between operators, and relations with the railways and the Post Office. (3)

18

Many photographs, particularly pre-1914, show hand-carts as a specific part of city traffic. There is room for a study of the trades which used handpropelled vehicles and the designs of the vehicles themselves.

19

For a horse bus fleet, the capital tied up in horses was typically 15 times as great as that tied up in vehicles. How far did the capital tied up in horses, rather than any sentiment or unwillingness to accept change, influence the London General directors in delaying the changeover to buses until the B type had proved its effectiveness?

20

British Coachways, set up by a group of independent operators following the 1980 Act, failed to sustain competition with National Express, then part of the state owned NBC. Research is needed on the financial and organisational reasons for British coachway's failure; was it the lack of centralised booking and marketing, or a breakdown of trust between operators?

Notes:

(1) See also *Newsletter* 20, and the item on page XX of this issue.

(2) In answer to Ian's plea for some information on this subject, *Newsletter* 22 will contain an article outlining the activities of Ensign, the Essex dealer who, *inter-alia*, disposed of the 2,600 DMS class Daimler Fleetlines of London Transport.

(3) This question (the parcels business) leads to another. Why did bus companies in general stick to the single business of carrying fare paying passengers over fixed routes? A few developed coaching and touring, but today the big companies leave these activities to others. Most properties owned by bus companies have been sold off. Why are the companies so adamant in following only one (declining) type of commercial activity?

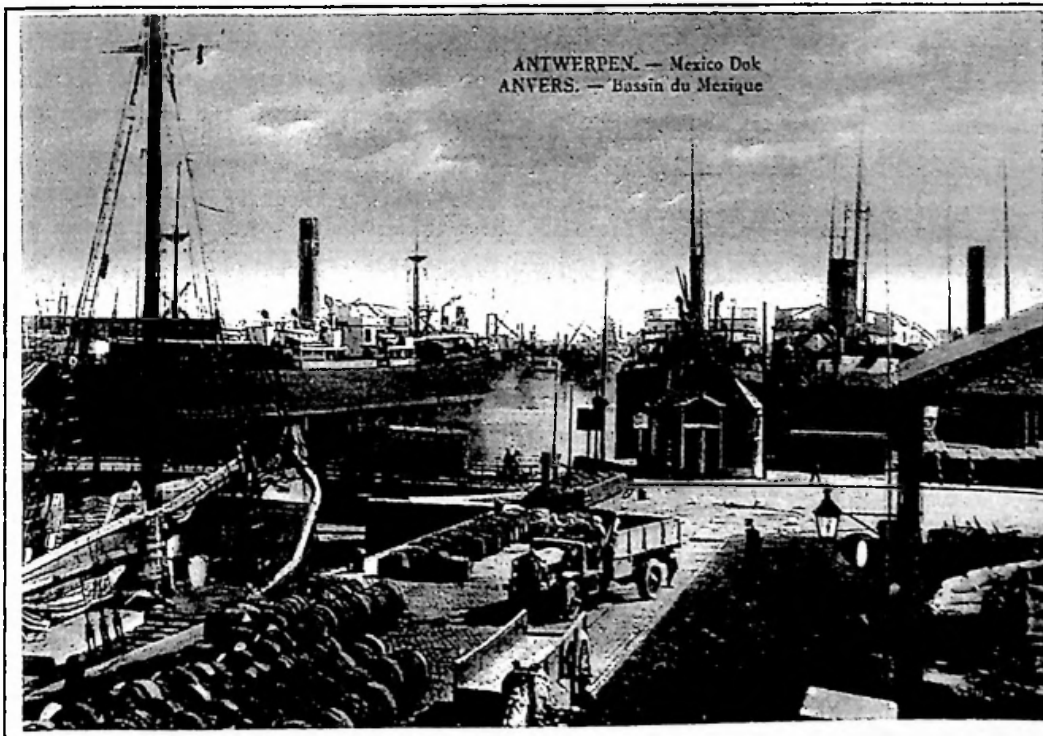
HISTORY ON A POSTCARD

USA "Liberty" Truck

In 1916-1917 the U.S. Army found difficulty servicing its motor transport fleet, composed of many makes and types. As a result they decided to design and produce a standard 3/5 ton lorry, to become known as the "Liberty", although it carried the letters USA on the bonnet. It was in fact manufactured by a number of vehicle builders. Many of these "class B 3/5 ton trucks, were used in Europe after the U.S.A joined with the Allies in April 1917, and when the fighting ended, those in Europe were left behind.

The French company Willeme reconditioned many Libertys and then began to build new ones, continuing until 1930. Conversions to pneumatic tyres were available, as was a six-wheel version, and the Company developed its own series of lorries from the design. In Belgium a company entitled Société Franco-Belge des Camions Liberty was set up in Brussels to salvage and rebuild ex army Libertys, and it too went on to build new lorries to the same, and later a modified, design.

The lorry in the picture is a Liberty, seen at Antwerp Docks. Judging by the lack of other mechanised transport, and the fact that this example carries a canvas hood, it may well be a genuine American made vehicle. It certainly closely resembles the trucks as built for use by the U.S. Army. Considering the fact that it is empty, the crew of four seems unnecessary, but then who could resist the offer of a ride in such a very impressive machine.



News from the 21st Century

What would the man on the Clapham omnibus think about the recent activities of two "bus tycoons" in the political affairs of this country? Brian Souter of *Stagecoach* recently funded a referendum in his native Scotland designed to influence the Scottish legislature. Paul Sykes, who once sold second-hand buses in Yorkshire, has pledged a large sum of money to Conservative Party funds, provided the party adopts a sceptical attitude towards integration with Europe and eschews the Euro.

Meanwhile *FirstBus* in Glasgow made an offer taken up by some 150 persons. If they brought in their car, in whatever condition, to the *FirstBus* depot for disposal, they would receive in exchange a bus ticket, worth £600, giving a year's free travel. There were conditions set: the car to be disposed of had to be registered, taxed, and insured in the name of the person taking up the offer, and to prevent opportunists cashing in, the £250,000 scheme was advertised with short notice. The managing director of *FirstBus* in Scotland said he believed that most of the motorists who surrendered cars were genuine.

The year 2000 has seen changes in Llandudno. The parking place alongside the Cenotaph has been used by the municipal "runabouts" since 1928, when Llandudno U.D.C. first began its circular tours of the Great Orme via the Marine Drive. Now this has been grassed over, and a new road layout created at this point, bringing to an end a 72 year old tradition.

The "runabouts" (in fact roofed chars-à-bancs) made good profits, earning a high rate of pence per car mile, as they always departed full and the passengers all went the whole way, there and back again being a scenic 4½ mile route along a road protected by a toll. The last few years have seen a much reduced service, and troubles with the Great Orme Tramway in 2000 have caused the buses to be deployed elsewhere.

Expatriate Enterprise

London - Cape Town

by Ron Phillips

Buying buses, building up a service, and selling on has become a regular feature of the Post-deregulation Era since 1986. But sixty years earlier the same thing was happening both here and abroad. Ron Phillips follows the fortunes of an enterprising busman.

The New Era Omnibus Company Ltd. was registered on the 24th November 1922, founded in London by four former taxi drivers. The leading light of the four was Victor Arthur Hughes, and he left in July 1923, only two months after the new company had started to run buses, to form another enterprise in the metropolis.

This was the Commonwealth Omnibus Co., which began to run buses in July 1923, although one source (*MTYB 1925/6*) says the service began in April. The business was turned into a limited company on 22nd August 1925, with the two original directors named as V.A. Hughes and Mrs Clara M. Hughes.

Services worked by Commonwealth, which was retitled **Commonwealth Omnibuses Limited** after August 1925, were Southall - London Bridge, Acton-Harlesden and Ealing - Beaconsfield, with the former also operated by New Era.

The New Era business sold out to the London Public Omnibus Company Ltd. in June 1927, and the Commonwealth company followed suit in November of the same year.

Hughes (from his own words) was also in some way connected with a third London independent bus company.

Mr. Hughes now departed for Cape Town, a city which was served by a British owned tramway company, with headquarters in London. (In fact, the tramways of Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Lisbon and Santiago (Chile) all shared the same offices and had common directors.) At the time in Cape Town there was a sudden growth in the use of motor buses, particularly on the coastal routes to the south-west of the city, which were served by a subsidiary of the City Tramways Company (CT) called the Camp's Bay Tramway Company. The majority of the buses in use were of American manufacture and based on lorry chassis, but Leyland Motors, who had had a depot in Cape Town since 1922, saw a chance to expand their business into the field of passenger chassis. Their machines, they argued, were superior in every way to the flimsy U.S. chassis favoured by the local owner drivers. Both the CT and the Camps Bay Tramway companies had small fleets of buses but did not seem

very keen to expand their use. A local man, well known in local politics, decided to raise some money and form a bus company to be known as the **Road Car Company**, but the attempt foundered, although the promoter, Mr. le Voy, did obtain one bus (a Leyland PLSC3 Lion) himself. With the Leyland Agent making several successful single sales to would-be bus operators, enter Victor Arthur Hughes.

The Leyland Agent instantly recorded that Mr. Hughes had arrived in Cape Town (about August 1929) to build up a business and sell it on to the CT. He also wrote that "this man knows more about running buses than any other person in Cape Town", and clearly considered his credit to be good, as in a short time Hughes purchased thirteen brand new Leyland Lion buses (eight LT1s and five LT2s). These were fitted with locally constructed bodies with rear entrances. Leather seating was provided in the saloon forward of the entrance, but the rear of the bus took the form of a standee vestibule, so that it had a capacity of 42 or 44 persons, of whom 26 or so could be seated. The entrance was marked by a sign declaring that the bus was for white passengers only.

Hughes' intention to sell out to the British owned tramway company was presumably based on his experience in London. Although the trams and the track in Cape Town were becoming worn out, much to the frustration of the Leyland Agent, who had sold a prototype Leyland Titan TD1 double decker bus to CT, the tramway company would not make up its mind over the future of its lines.

Buses in Cape Town were to fall under the control of a Transportation Board from 1/1/31. The Board which was to issue licences to run both buses and routes, and to have control over fare levels, was modelled on the system of Traffic Commissioners being introduced in Britain at the same period. Trams, however, could continue to operate howsoever the company wished, and at fare levels set by the operator, so to abandon the trams would mean a great loss of operational freedom. One tram route (Wynberg) had been closed in favour of CT buses, but was now reopened to trams in order to be rid of the restrictions imposed by the Board. Eventually the CT replaced trams with trackless trolleybuses, which could be operated (CT first established) under the same rules as trams and were free from the external regulation. CT purchased its fleet of Ransomes trolleybuses in 1935, but prior to this ran a single Guy double deck trolleybus (a former demonstrator to South Africa 1930/1,) for several years like a ghostly precursor. The company even contemplated converting some Leyland Lion PLSC1 motor buses into trolleybuses in the early thirties. (Bradford Corporation had a series of single deck trolleybuses on Leyland Lion

chassis with English Electric equipment, so the idea is not as fanciful as it seems, although the Leyland Agent dismissed it as being too costly a solution.)

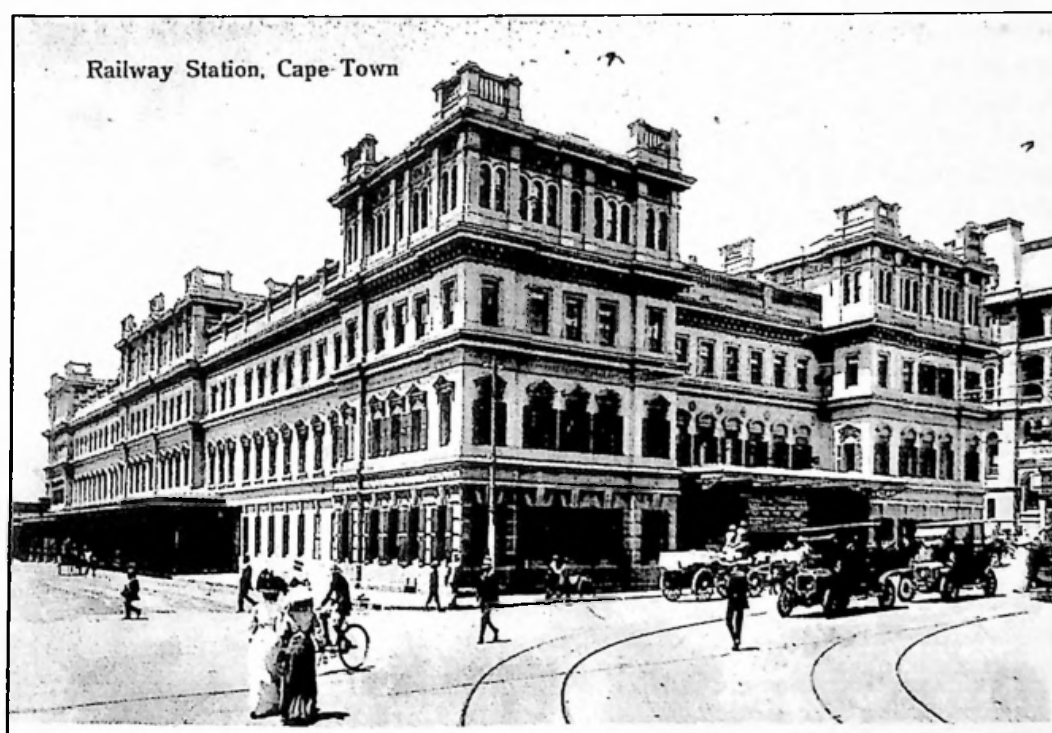
To return to Hughes' activities. Having set up the Cape Town Omnibus Company at some considerable cost, he approached CT in the autumn of 1930 suggesting that he and they might come to an agreement regarding fares on the common route to Sea Point which both companies ran. This done, Hughes next raised the subject of a takeover of his company by CT. The tramways company was not sure about this, and waited until January 1931 when the new licencing laws came into force. CT then agreed to take a 51% controlling interest in the Cape Town Omnibus Company, and to transfer to it all their buses which ran on that side of town. The new subsidiary company would be managed by Hughes, at a salary of £1000 per annum. The remaining CT buses which ran on the other side of town would stay under CT ownership and management. The reason for this was that there was still much independent opposition here, and CT wanted a free hand to operate either trams or buses as they felt best.

The takeover of Hughes' company took place at the end of March 1931, and in the early days of April industrial trouble flared up. Drivers and conductors of the former CT buses were unionised, and were now obliged to sign up to work for an entity which did not recognise the union. A strike lasting a week ensued, at the end of which it was agreed that the former CT men could continue to enjoy the

benefits of a union, and former Hughes employees could join a union if they so wished. Not long after this, but not it seems because of this, V.A. Hughes was obliged to resign from his managership. It seems that he was found to have been involved in "some shady deals". He was, of course, a rich man as the sale of his interest in the Cape Town Omnibus Co. had raised a considerable sum (The 49% not held by him was, it seems, owned by Syfret's, a finance house.)

He now saw an opportunity in East London, the port on the eastern Cape Coast. The municipality was thinking about replacing trams with buses, and Hughes offered to manage a future municipal bus department, or to operate a bus service under some form of franchise from the town council. His offers were rejected, and he returned to Cape Town. The final record of Hughes in South Africa is a note from the Leyland Agent. He learned that Hughes and his wife were to sail to Australia, and stated that he would write to his counterpart in Sydney to tell him of Hughes' impending arrival. It is not clear whether his letter would be one of warning, or to recommend Mr. Hughes as a good Leyland customer. As the files relating to the Sydney depot of Leyland Motors make no mention of Hughes, perhaps he put his money to work in some business other than transport. The owners of another Cape Town bus company which sold out to CT put the money into a shirt factory!

(My thanks to R. Atkinson, J.E. Dunabin, A.G. Johnson, T.B. Maund, M.A. Sutcliffe and the BCVM Archive for elements in the above narrative.)



A postcard view of Cape Town Railway Station when the tram reigned supreme. Only two early automobiles are to be seen, dating this view as c1920. A double deck tram is about to enter from the right. The government controlled railway was soon to feel the effects of bus competition, and an attempt was made to curb it. This story will be told in *Newsletter 22*.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

Referring to the item entitled "Upper class" in Newsletter 18, the following may be of interest.

In colonial times, Kenya Bus Services Limited had a system of first and second class on its bus services in Nairobi and its environs. The law forbade discrimination even then but the price mechanism usually resulted in Europeans using the first class and indigenous people the second class. The mix of passengers differed from one route to another and on routes where no European was likely to want to go, all the accommodation was second class. On other routes the saloon was equally divided and the conductor was able to walk through from one section to the other. On a few routes where Europeans were in the minority, the first class consisted of a compartment rather like half a railway compartment with a long forward-facing bench seat across the bus behind the driver, fares being paid through a hatch to the conductor in the second class. As far as I can remember, first class fares were 50% above second class.

T.B.Maund, Oxton, Wirral

Matters Arising

MOTOR M.T.C COACH SERVICES

Further to the item submitted by John Hibbs in Newsletter 20, which presented the arguments put forward by the M.T.Co. against the decision of the South Eastern Traffic Commissioners to restrict services it had operated for over a decade between London and the Kent coast, John Dunabin recalls that the M.T.Co. continued to trade into the post-

war period under the title Homeland Motor Coach Tours, and then later the business was subsumed into Wallace Arnold. The express services passed to East Kent in May 1937, and five vehicles (Leyland Tigers with Duple coach bodies) were transferred.

References to the *Smithies' List* have been seen in these columns on numerous occasions, and as John consulted his copy in order to recall precise details for this postscript, the Hon. Editor is taking the opportunity to reproduce below a facsimile copy of the entry for M.T.Co. in that document, to illustrate the type of material it contains. (Various reference numbers, of no importance herein, have been left out.)

The list is confined to limited companies, therefore it gives no information of the date of foundation of the original partnership between Flin and Collett. Neither does it state the exact nature of each firm's business, other than what can be implied from the addresses, trading titles, etc. etc.

Some earlier history of the M.T.Co. can be derived from issues of the *Motor Transport Year Book*, a source book recommended to us by John Hibbs in Newsletter no.15. The 1925/6 edition confirms that the partners were F.A.Flin and F.A.Collett, and that the firm operated between London and Margate and Ramsgate in the summer months, as well as providing "a programme of country tours and excursion trips" By 1931/2, (with still no mention of Homeland Motor Coach Tours as a trading name), the M.T.Co had eight vehicles and a route mileage of 82.

A section in the 1931/2 MYTB on "Associations and Societies" records F.A.Flin as Vice Chairman of the National Association of Public Service Vehicle Operators, listing him amidst several exalted names of bus and coach industry second-generation pioneers such as Raymond Birch, Guy Brown and H.T. Rickards.

M.T.COMPANY (MOTOR COACHES) LIMITED (originally F.A.FLIN and F. A. COLLETT T/A M.T.COMPANY-(HOMELAND MOTOR COACH TOURS)

Royal Garage, 35 Naylor's Road, Peckham, London S.E.15
26 Queen Street, Ramsgate.

814 Old Kent Road, Peckham, London S.E.15

8 Park Lane, Croydon, Surrey.

Martin's Yard, Endwell Road, Brockley, London S.E.4

1 Vicarage Road, London S.E.5

Coach Station, Westcliff Road, Ramsgate.

R/O originally 169 New Cross Road, New Cross, London S.E.14
Inc. 3/4/33.

Name changed to HOMELAND MOTOR COACH TOURS LIMITED 23/4/46
Stage and express services to East Kent Road Car Co. 1937.

BEDFORD

1931-1939

Ron Phillips reviews the remarkable rise to market prominence of the commercial vehicle range which was introduced by Vauxhall in 1931, by the adoption of American methods of production. The article is based mainly on information taken from the papers kept in the Library of the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu, Hampshire.

Vauxhall Motors performed a remarkable feat in the early thirties, when they launched the Bedford range of commercial vehicles. There is uncertainty as to the precise reason for the adoption of the name "Bedford", but there is no uncertainty about the rapid success of the product, as within six years, in 1937, the Company could make the following claims.

1. 70% of all passenger vehicles in the 15 to 26 seat range sold in 1937 were Bedfords.
2. 25% of all commercial vehicles licensed in recent months were Bedfords.
3. 42% of new trucks in the 30cwt - 2 ton 30cwt class were Bedfords.
4. 60% of all British truck exports throughout 1936 were Bedfords.

Although American made Chevrolet trucks(1) had been assembled by Vauxhall at Luton during 1929-31, the new Bedfords which superseded them were not copies, but were built to a design produced in Britain. Much play was made of the fact that the new vehicles were "Made in England", and vehicles for export were fitted with extra badges on the bonnet sides which read "BRITISH BEDFORD". British they were, but the concept and realisation were American inspired, as the Bedford plant was an outpost of the General Motors empire. The following tenets were strictly adhered to:

Vehicles to be produced on a line

Selling cost to be kept as low as possible.

No variations to be made from standard.

"Add-ons" to be provided by others

Because of the variety of forms which the lorry/van can take, there was a need for a choice of wheelbase and type of factory made body (flat, sided, high-sided, etc.) but customers could not have "one-off" specials. As for the mechanical parts, choice was strictly limited and only one Bedford made petrol engine was available in all the lorry and bus. chassis. (This was not fitted, of course, in the Vauxhall car derived light vans). In order to be able to provide a complete light bus, it was necessary for Vauxhall to arrange with an existing bus bodybuilder, Duple of Hendon, to build

standard bodies, and as with commercial bodies there was a choice. In this case, a service bus, a coach, and a touring coach were constructed by Duple to a highly standardised design. These were revised a little more often than the chassis, as bus bodywork was subject to the whims of fashion a little more than the hidden mechanical parts.

Contractors who provided the "add-ons" for the commercial vehicles built by Bedford were:

J. Brockhouse & Co., West Bromwich

Carrimore 6 wheelers Ltd., N. Finchley

Eagle, Warwick

Flexion Extensions Ltd., Hendon

Muir Hill, Old Trafford

Truck & Tractor Appliances, Trafford Park

Universal Power Drives, Perivale.

Spurling

Perhaps the most famous sub-contractor of all was Scammell Lorries (Watford), who from January 1939 exclusively provided trailers and trailer gear for Bedford lorries, although they had provided this since two years previously. The tractor + trailer combination was advertised as "the extension of the mechanical horse" (see next page)

Bedford had a vigorous publicity machine, and there are some fine "art deco" style posters and leaflets. Lists of customers were published. Famous names included were Radio Times, Golden Shred, Kemps Biscuits, Carreras (makers of Craven 'A'), G.W.R. and Regent Petrol. Less famous names to be seen on the sides of vans were H.M. Stationery Office, Ordnance Survey and Hull Corporation (telephone department). But it was not the fact that well known household brand names could be seen on the side of Bedford vehicles that was the true sign of their success. It was the name of J. Bloggs, High Street, Anytown. They could be found anywhere in Britain, in town and country alike.

They had a notable export success too. By 1932 they had sold in Egypt, Malta, Spain, Portugal, New Zealand, Denmark, Jamaica, and Sierra Leone, and many more countries were to follow. By 1934 China, Japan and Hong Kong had joined the list of customers, the latter with Duple bodied coaches. A notable coup in 1937 was the sale of 508 trucks to the Afghan government.

There was a monthly magazine which was distributed via dealers and sent to Bedford customers. It had a cover price of 4d., but it was essentially a propaganda sheet for the Bedford product containing advertisements of automotive products and articles about Bedford fleets, new Bedford lines and contemporary road haulage legislation. It was entitled "The Bedford Transportation Magazine", and it no doubt caused AEC Ltd. to launch "The AEC Gazette" and

Leyland Motors to start "The Leyland Journal"

Some of the items in the Bedford magazine make amusing reading. A coach was sold to a troupe of lady novelty swimmers, (The Eugene Mermaids), who toured the country putting on shows in open air lidos and swimming pools.. They were a pre-war version of modern synchronised swimming teams. Another band of pretty young ladies toured in the Bedford/Duple "Ex-Lax" coaches. Their function was to hand out to members of the public free samples of the chocolate flavoured laxative.

Made to a price, the specification of the Dupler bodies fitted to Bedford chassis were strict and precise. You chose your colour, and with it you got "basic parliamentary name and address" The roller destination blinds were provided with six names only. It was the price, not the fittings, which made the buses and coaches so popular. A 20 seat bus was £625, the top of the range 26 seat luxury touring coach (raised rear rows of seats to provide a luggage locker big enough to stow 26 normal sized suit cases, but an opening sun roof extra) was £825 in 1936. (To put this in perspective, a Leyland or AEC coach at the time cost at least £1200, but carried very few extra passengers. No wonder the Bedford was popular with seasonal operators.

As war was about to break out, new models (the O series) were put into production. The changes were basically cosmetic, with a new radiator grille and more rounded cab replacing the WLB, WHB, WTB series with squared off cab and rectangular radiator. The war saw a new utility range produced on the same mechanical units, and a second article will review the tremendous success enjoyed by the Bedford range during and after the war .

Interim Horse.... or a way round the Road Traffic Act ?

The following paragraphs were penned in 1936 by a sales manager of a well known commercial vehicle producer. His job was to call on hauliers around the country to try and interest them in his firm's products.

"It will not be long before the first two year's operation of the Road Traffic Act comes to an end and applications will have to be put forward by users (particularly goods operators) for renewal of their licences. It is well known what the Railways' intentions are in this direction. Opposition in every case, which will result in the curtailment of the privileges

granted to those goods road users, their mileage radius cut down, increased tonnage not granted, increased pressure brought to bear by the Railway Companies that *they* operate a satisfactory service for which the applicant's requirements for renewal of existing tonnage or increase tonnage is redundant. It is placing the road users, particularly the haulage contractors, in a very difficult position, and we are very lucky that we have been favoured with the number of orders that we have had in the past....."

That said (i.e. the Railways are against the spread of road transport....note that the Railways are in those days always dignified by the use of capital letters) the writer goes on with a further complaint against them.

"When the Road Traffic Act came into existence it was never anticipated that vehicles for transport other than mechanically propelled commercial vehicles would come under review, such as horse drawn machines, barges on canals, and so on. There are cases on record, however, where an owner of barges has been able to make an application to transfer his tonnage from canal to road, and the Railway Companies at the present moment are carrying out a very astute game and gradually changing horse drawn tonnage into motor vehicles. This is done by asking the Commissioners for powers to remove the horse and replace it with a mechanical horse, then this mechanical horse is switched to an articulated machine, the next process in the change being the switch to rigid machines. Horses, not coming under the Act, have no given status for any given territory, and, consequently, the Railway Companies having made the change as mentioned above can put this vehicle where they please. It is very noticeable also that the vehicles which are being purchased are mainly in two classes, either the light ones generally to come under 2½ tons for 30 m.p.h. with the biggest possible payload to be got on these machines, or else they go right over to the heaviest rigid machine on 3 or 4 axles."

An interesting thought. Were any guide lines applied to applications for licences for road vehicles to replace horses? Was it an omission in the Road Traffic Act to leave horse drawn transport unlicensed? Here is yet another field for research.

Was the three wheeled mechanical horse, which was clearly intended for short range haulage, treated differently in taxation and licencing laws from its four, six, and eight wheeled cousins? The view expressed by Bedford, that their tractor and trailer unit was a upgrade of the mechanical horse, is exactly in line with the thoughts expressed above.

LEGLSS, into the MILLENIUM

The Death of Pedestrianism
by John Dunabin

While fiercely rejected by some religious fundamentalists, the validity of Darwin's Theory of Evolution is widely accepted as a good working hypothesis. But Darwin saw evolution as an extremely slow process; can we speed it up ?

Over the past century there has been a steep decline in the use of legs for strictly utilitarian purposes. Like many Europeans, I was born too late and too affluent to remember a non-vehicular society, but I can recall, directly or by hearsay, situations when walking was commonplace, not for recreation or exercise, not for getting to the bus stop or the parked car, but for really getting somewhere.

Living in south west Lancashire, several older members of my family had been "flatmen", sailing out of the Mersey to North Wales with coal and returning with slate. My grandmother (born 1863) recalled for me an aunt who sailed with her skipper husband. Berthing in Liverpool for the weekend, there was then for her a walk home of some 14 miles, and carrying a hamper of washing on her hip. The return journey, with all washed and possibly dried, followed.

More dramatic, actually tragic, was the story of a bare fist boxing match held on the south bank of the Mersey just across from our village. A Scotsman - he had to be a Scotsman of course - having walked all the way from his home country to see it, declined to pay the modest charge sought by the Ferryman, tried to swim across, and drowned.

These and other anecdotes referred of course to events taking place before I was born. Moving a hundred miles or so to the Welsh border seemed a step back in time in more ways than one. Possibly as part of the welcoming process, my father and I - this was an all-male event, but not because of our destination, this was a chapel occasion - were invited to join a small party to attend a concert in the next village.

Seen later in broad daylight the route was not too difficult, just narrow, twisting, and very hilly, but this was a winter evening, with not a light to be seen, street nor other. The local men though, having done it many times before, never faltered. This in a sense was pleasure walking, but in an area where personal transport, even horse or bicycle, was rare, walking was born of necessity.

Employment possibilities too were limited, but

very few men qualified for the "dole" One such was known affectionately as "Johnny Walker". Twice each week he made the double journey totalling 24 miles to sign on at his nearest employment exchange. Sometimes he was lucky and got a lift part way, but he was always prepared to go the full distance in all weathers.

A few years later, these experiences having become overlaid by urban living, with buses and trams nose to tail in never ending streams, I was introduced to life in the Pennine foothills on the Lancashire/Yorkshire boundary. Not everybody had to walk far to work or school, but all had to be prepared to; only the weaklings, it seemed, were deterred by a foot or two of packed snow ! One man I knew well, then around 50, regularly walked "over the tops", a round trip of at least ten miles each day, to work.

How long will it be, at the present rate of change, before people without some form of wheeled transport cease to venture beyond their garden gates?

COVER STORY

The Bus Stand,
Aylesbury, 1932

Photo from BCVM Archive, Leyland; printed by electronic means from the 620 size glass negative. Ron Phillips and Roger Atkinson provide the following information:

This negative was singled out in an exercise to create a data base of information stored on negatives other than those of vehicles posed at the factory. Sometimes Leyland Motors sought pictures of their vehicles in service, and such were taken by outside photographers. In this instance we have one of three views of Premier Line Leyland Tiger TS3s in Aylesbury on service D, to Aldwych. Behind this coach is an open top double decker working to Tring via Aston Clinton. It clearly has a "London style" body.

Centre is a single decker of West London Coaches, Victoria, and which clearly shows a style of route board later adopted by the Greenline, and which is also working an Aylesbury - London service. To the right is the rear end of single deck bus in service for the Aylesbury Omnibus Co., taken over in May 1933 by Eastern National, but which was then split between United Counties, Thames Valley and City of Oxford. Aylesbury, it seems, was a frontier town !

The Premier Line bus, GN 5147, carries a 26 seater coach body by London Lorries. It has one of the early style radiators adorned with an enamelled picture of a tiger, whilst the words "Leyland Tiger" appear in fretted letters below.

IMAGES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

100 years of road transport - harbingers of fate



Remember "TIR" ? The picture above of a Leyland Beaver tractor hauling a Scammell trailer is a reminder of the beginnings of the international movement of goods by road begun in earnest in the sixties. The arrival of foreign lorries carrying goods to Britain was soon followed by foreign manufacturers selling their lorries to British operators.

Nothing good comes of incest. The curious picture below shows a Standard 2-tonner hauling two Standard-Triumph car shells. Taken in the early days of the Leyland/Standard-Triumph merger, it marks an early step in the downfall of Leyland.

Photos by British Leyland

