

ROADS AND ROAD TRANSPORT

HISTORY CONFERENCE NEWSLETTER

June 2001

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SOCIETY OFFICERS

President: To be appointed
Past President: Prof. Theo Barker

Chairman: Prof. John Hibbs O.B.E.
University of Central England
Perry Barr, Birmingham B42 2SU

Secretary: Gordon Knowles
7 Squirrels Green
Great Bookham
Surrey KT23 3LE

Treasurer: Roger Atkinson O.B.E.
45 Dee Banks
Chester CH3 5UU

Research Coordinator: Ian Yearsley
97 Putney Bridge Road
London SW15 2PA

Academic Adviser: Prof J. Armstrong
Thames Valley University
London W5 5RF

Newsletter Editor: Ron Phillips
16 Victoria Avenue, Grappenhall
Warrington WA4 2PD

E-Mail Ron@transnet.freemove.co.uk

COVER PICTURE: LLANDUDNO PIER See page 8

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CONFERENCE MATTERS

February 10th 2001

AGM 2001

Professor John Hibbs opened the meeting at 11.15 am. In welcoming those present, John referred to the recent travel difficulties on the railways, of which we were still troubled by the aftermath. However, this meeting was significant in being the first to which many of our members had travelled at half fare. (Special Virgin Rail fare offer)

John next referred to the success of the Symposium held in November 2000, and expressed thanks on behalf of the Conference to Kevin Hey, Corinne Mulley, the speakers, the University of Salford and the Museum of British Road Transport, Coventry. It is hoped that the papers given will be published, and John asked if anyone would wish to contribute some further articles to be added to the intended papers.

The Post of President

John then raised the subject of the poor health of our President, Professor Theo Barker, and whether it would be right to appoint a new President. Should we also appoint or elect a Vice Chairman? Numerous members voiced their sorrow at the news about Theo Barker, and after hearing various points of view the meeting resolved that Professor Theo Barker be given the title of Past President. Secondly it was resolved that an approach should be made to Gary Turvey in the first instance, inviting him to be President of the R&RTHC for a period of three years. It was felt that a renewable term of office would be of benefit both to the Conference and to the incumbent. John Hibbs was entrusted with the task of implementing these resolutions. The matter of the appointment of a Vice Chairman was left on the table.

Officer's Reports

The society officers then made a report of the past year. Gordon Knowles stated that whilst the number of associate members remained just under fifty, we had recently gained three new Corporate Members. Gordon mentioned the matter of the disposal of the books and papers of our late associate member L.Gordon Reid. He had been able to assist Gordon's son in placing these in an archive in the West Country, Stroud Mill Heritage Centre. Richard Storey and John Armstrong were making arrangements to evaluate these papers. In particular, there was a number of significant documents relating to commercial vehicle bodywork.

Roger Atkinson presented his financial report for the year, which was distributed for inspection. The matter of raising the subscription of the R&RTHC

to £10 for associate members and £30 for Corporate Members had been debated on a previous occasion, and after stating once again the reasons for doing this, the meeting resolved that for the year 2002 the new rates should apply. Subscriptions for the current year (2001) remain unchanged. The financial statement was then submitted for examination.

Ron Phillips recorded that the production of the Newsletter was now well established at the level of 4 issues per year, and that the current commercial arrangements for printing were both economical and of a very satisfactory quality. He always welcomed contributions, which did not have to be of great length. For instance, issue 24 contained reproduction of and notes on two very rare tickets. Any historic road transport tickets lying in your drawer or between the pages of a book could be sent in to form the basis of an item in our pages.

Ian Yearsley reported on two current projects: John Senior of Venture/TPC was seeking information on the South African activities of Metro-Cammell-Weymann for a forthcoming book, and Tony Newman was seeking information on producer gas buses. Ian informed us that there were numerous centenaries of municipal transport undertakings about to be celebrated. Unfortunately, many of the largest and most famous undertakings no longer existed, but the Manchester Transport Museum was going to organise an event celebrating the Manchester Corporation undertaking.

Re-election of Officers, 2002 AGM

The re-election of officers was then formally confirmed. The question of appointment of a Vice-Chairman was raised once more, and it was resolved that Richard Storey be appointed to this office, with the duty of standing-in if the Chairman be absent.

Final business consisted of nominating the examiners of the accounts, and fixing the date of the next AGM for Saturday 9th February 2002, at MBRT Coventry. Proceedings ended at 12.30 pm

19th BUSINESS MEETING

John Hibbs began with a summary of points raised in the minutes of the 18th Business Meeting held last September.

He reminded us that all the historical documents held by the Chartered Institute of Transport/Institute of Logistics and Transport are now safely kept at the ILT premises at Buckingham Gate, and are available for consultation by Institute members free of charge, and by others upon payment of a fee. He took note of the fact that Conference had yet to investigate having a web site, and would endeavour to look further into

this matter. He drew attention to the fact that we needed to have some means of knowing what other societies were doing....for instance he understood that the Omnibus Society had a recent document on the early activities of the Traffic Commissioners, and he held up a list of books published on public transport in Devon and Cornwall, including the unusually titled "Lunacy and licensing" (see panel). Graham Boyes spoke of the need to have an up to date list of road transport books, as many small publishers did not register their works with the copyright libraries, nor issue ISBN numbers etc.

Professor John Armstrong gave the meeting a progress report on the Companion to British Road Haulage History (CBRHH). He announced that 370 entries were now completed, occupying some 170 pp. He said some topics remained uncovered and invited enquiries from would-be writers, as well as offers of photographs, in particular showing lorries at work.

Symposium 2001

The meeting was adjourned for lunch at 1.00 pm, and resumed an hour later. During this time the accounts were examined and approved. The meeting continued with a discussion of the form and content for the next Symposium. The suggested theme was the care and preservation of transport related memorabilia, ranging from books, leaflets, etc. through to small objects and finally to larger artefacts. Even complete vehicles were not outside the interests of our members, too, but that was a rather more complex matter. Roger Atkinson reiterated the need for guide lines on the disposal of materials upon the death of a collector, a matter further elaborated by John Hibbs. Ian Yearsley mentioned the Collection Management Committee, set up by the Tramway Museum Society and which was headed by Winstan Bond and Rosie Thacker. Others mentioned the need to deal effectively with duplicate material, the problems of cataloguing one's private collection, of defining "memorabilia", of having to reduce the sheer bulk of some collections, and of the safety of certain repositories (this refers both to the physical conditions and to the assumed longevity of the archive.) This discussion concluded with a declared intention to hold a Symposium at the National Tramway Museum, Crich, on a Saturday in November 2001. It was proposed that Conference's Standing Committee should meet in the near future to make firm plans, identify speakers and invite them to partake, and draw up a programme for this event.

Proposal re another 'Companion'

Richard Storey spoke of his participation on the committee preparing the Companion to BRHH, which he described as "one of the most interesting things that I have ever done", and said that he would

like to see another similar work produced on the British bus and coach industry. Members present urged that such a work should include trams, trolleybuses and early horse drawn trams and buses. John Armstrong pointed out that the work on the CBRHH had a year and a bit to go before publication, and that work on this possible new companion should not start before that time. He also pointed out that there was a wealth of existing writing on many aspects of passenger road transport, and that the suggested volume would lack the ground-breaking nature of the CBRHH. A counter argument was voiced that the very existence of so much literature showed that there would be a good market for the proposed volume. It was resolved, therefore, that a sub-committee under the chairmanship of John Hibbs should meet between now and the next meeting of Conference, and that a report would be presented then on the desirability of such a project. The sub-committee, to meet at Birmingham, would consist of Richard Storey, John Birks, Ian Yearsley, Andy Axton and John Hibbs.

Information sought

Tony Newman now asked for information on two particular aspects of road transport history. The first was the precise origin of the system used in the UK to classify roads. Was it true that originally the plans envisaged A, B, C, and D class roads? It was agreed that one individual must have been "father" of the system, who was it?

The second subject about which there was scant and confused information was the origin of traffic signals. Where was the first installation in London? It is thought to have consisted of a form of signal cabin, with levers and rods which activated semaphore signals, with spectacle glasses illuminated by gas light. An installation in Parliament Square was thought to have been to control an early pedestrian crossing. Various suggestions were made from the floor, and we were promised answers to some of the questions in due course.

Date of Next Meeting

The session concluded after the date was fixed for the next meeting: **Saturday September 22nd 2001**. The venue will be MBRT Coventry, and it was hoped that there may be an opportunity to visit the archives of the museum as a prelude to the proposed Symposium in November.

Presentation

There followed a slide presentation by Roger de Boer. The theme was vehicle preservation in the West Midlands. Roger began by saying that he had been told by his parents that his fascination with motor vehicles, in particular buses, went back at least the age of 20 months, and recalled his confusion when

told that Toscanini was a famous conductor. His interest in the preservation of old buses went back to the time in the early sixties when he visited the West Bromwich depot and saw work in progress on the restoration of an early Thornycroft, EA 4181. He next saw the magnificently restored Birmingham COG5 1107 on the road, and after several schemes which came to nought, he eventually succeeded in acquiring an interest in a bus for preservation. The slides all depicted buses from the West Midlands, chiefly those of Midland Red and Birmingham Corporation, and they illustrated the triumphs and disasters in the world of bus preservation. We were left with some insight into what can be one of the most difficult and challenging ways of preserving our transport heritage.



Birmingham 1107, a Daimler COG5, was one of the earliest West Midlands buses to be preserved. It is seen on the road in the sixties. (Ron Phillips)

Standing Committee

A meeting of the Standing Committee took place on 5th March to arrange the Colloquium. The initial proposals were subsequently changed for a number of reasons. It was decided to hold the meeting at Derby rather than Crich, to avoid possible travel difficulties for those coming by public transport at that time of year. The revised venue will give more time for the discussion, and delegates can reach the Midland Hotel by foot from Derby Railway Station.

The panel opposite gives full details of the speakers and the topics which will be discussed. We hope as many members as possible will attend this meeting, as the subject is an important one. It will address the problem which we all face.....what do we possess which we feel is too worthwhile to be destroyed, and how can we be sure that it will not be destroyed when we can no longer look after it? Enrolment forms for the Symposium will be distributed with this copy of Newsletter. Additional forms may be obtained from the Hon. Treasurer, Roger Atkinson.

Professor Theo Barker

At the Annual General Meeting this year, members learned with deep concern that our President, Professor Theo Barker, is suffering from Alzheimer's disease. There was complete agreement that it would not be proper to ask him to continue in office, and that the Chairman should write to explain this, and to thank him for all that he has contributed to the success of the Conference.

Professor Barker was President of the Railway and Canal Historical Society when he approached a number of people, one of them our Chairman, Professor Hibbs, with the idea of forming an association that should bring together the various historical societies and museums involved with road transport. Several informal meetings were held, leading to a National Road Transport History Symposium, which was held at Coventry University in 1992. Following this, with Theo's enthusiastic backing, the decision was taken to create the Conference as a continuing organisation, and that it should include the history of the roads as well as that which moves over them.

What followed will be familiar to many members, but it would be impossible to overestimate the importance of Theo Barker's support and guiding hand. The Annual General Meeting, not wanting this contribution to be forgotten, decided that, when a new President had been appointed, Professor Barker's name should appear on our stationery and publicity as Past President. JH

THE RECORDS HAVE BEEN ARCHIVED

As this page was being prepared, your Editor had come from listening to a broadcast discussion, in which an expert, bemoaning the lack of information available on the topic under discussion, had used the words, "and often, the records have been archived."

It was clear that he meant to say "the records have been put away in an inaccessible place", or, worse "put away after the passage of a statutory period, to be thrown away after a further statutory period."

The discussion in question reached the conclusion that keeping a register (i.e. a form of summary in chronological order) would have avoided the acute problem they now faced.

Could we have told them so?

News from the 21st Century

There seems to have been a revival of an event which featured annually in the early decades of the last century.....the inspection of taxi cabs. In many towns, the horse drawn carriages which plied for hire were lined up and inspected by the Watch Committee, who either authorised the carriages to be licensed or banned them until repairs had been made. When motor taxis were introduced, the same "experts" passed their judgement, sometimes making their decisions dependent on that of an outside person who understood motorcars.

By the sixties, the need for all motor vehicles to be subject to an annual MoT test rendered local inspections redundant. New concerns, however, have now caused the revival of the inspection by the local authority. Essentially the new arrangements are a check by local authority and police to see that each taxi has been registered correctly and has all the necessary documents the law requires. The traditional (now yellow) "Hackney Carriage Plate" has for some time been more specific than hitherto, giving such details as the registered number, make and colour of the cab. This new inspection has been named "Taxi Enforcement Day" by one local authority.

Another type of vehicle which has come under scrutiny is the School Bus. Local authorities pay out considerable sums for school transport, and although there are stated rules, these are often flouted by the operators. The vehicle inspection is to ensure that the vehicles in use are suitable and in good condition.

A problem that has arisen in this sphere is a by-product of de-regulation. Double deck buses are widely used for school transport, and these are generally older vehicles. De-regulation caused a glut of second-hand vehicles in 1985-7, so few new ones were purchased, and consequently vehicles of about 15 years of age, the usual age for school buses, are very hard to come by at present.

It seems likely, in the light of recent events such as the school bus driver in Greater Manchester who took his passengers for "an unauthorised day trip" instead of to school, and another case in Cheshire where a school bus driver who was sacked for hitting a low bridge was employed the following day by another school bus operator, that enforcement of the laws regarding both vehicles and the men who drive them will be tightened up.

R & RTHC COLLOQUIUM 2001

at
The Midland Hotel
Midland Road
Derby
on Saturday 3rd November 2001
10.30 - 16.30

"The Preservation and Disposal of Personal Collections"

Speakers
Ian Yearsley
(TMS and R&RTHC)

Richard Storey
(Vice Chairman R&RTHC)

Steve Bagley
**(Museum British Road
Transport Coventry)**

Andrew Johnson
(Treasurer, PSVCircle)

Brian Longworth
(Glasgow Transport Study Group)

The speakers will address such topics as caring for documents and small artifacts, catalogueing and labelling, how to arrange for their future care, wills and bequests, choice of executors, and safe archive and museum repositories for transport related items.

Enrolment forms now available

Catering Facilities, Parking, Coffee on arrival.
Overnight accommodation available at special
rate of £47.50 per night (double or single at same
price, breakfast extra)

LUNACY & LICENSING

Early Public Transport in Tiverton

There was a need for local councils to appoint a committee "to carry out the duties of the Council under the Mental Deficiency Act, 1913", and in the case of Tiverton it seems that the old-fashioned and established word "lunacy" was preferred over the new-fangled jargon "mental deficiency". It would also seem that the Local Government Emergency Provisions Act, 1916, was also entrusted to the same committee, hence the title of a booklet, (title above) published by R. Grimley, of Old Post, Bigbury, Kingsbridge, Devon TQ7 4AP, which tells the story of the railways, horse drawn omnibuses, motor chars-à-banc and motor omnibuses of Tiverton.

Crosville of Chester, which in 1920 was quite a small bus company operating in the Wirral and Cheshire with about 50 vehicles, decided to form a branch in North Devon. This resulted in the formation of Colwills Motor Services of Ilfracombe in 1920. The following year a base was established at Tiverton, and in February two Daimler buses, of the same type as used by Crosville and in a similar livery, were lettered for "Croscols" and commenced running a service between Tiverton and Cullompton. With an address in Fore Street, Tiverton, the Company was accepted as local and was defended against an incursion by Devon General. The name, of course, was a combination of "Crosville" and "Colwills". There was great support from the local villages and several more services were started. Eventually the Lunacy Act and Licensing Committee had to give way to pressure from Devon General and allow that company to serve Tiverton-Exeter route, and Croscols sold out in 1924.

Stamps and Buses

Royal Mail issued a set of 5 stamps depicting British double deck buses in May 2001. The stamps are for first class postage (27p) and come over the counter as single stamps, or in sheets of five (there are five different stamps) or in strips in a presentation pack. The latter has detailed information on the buses depicted and is illustrated by various colourful bus tickets from all round the country (No, not just London Bell Punch examples!). Curiously, there is further merchandise on offer including model buses (a Go Northern Metrobus, an Arriva Olympian and a Swindon Guy Arab), key rings, pin badges, framed prints, ties, bow ties, braces, handkerchiefs, mugs, postcards, phone cards, jig-saws, posters, and even Waddington plates.

REVIEW

TRAMWAY REVIEW No.185, Spring 2001
Published by LRTA Publications, 13A The Precinct, Broxbourne, Herts, AL3 4SE. £2.75

The Tramway Review is the long established historical journal of the LRTA. The Spring 2001 issue contains an article by J.D. Watson on Teesside Tramcar Renumbering which is worthy of comment.

Although explaining the peculiar intricacies of the renumbering of the cars of the erstwhile Imperial Tramways Company, whose assets were split between the Corporations of Middlesbrough, Stockton and Thornaby, the article also gives a succinct history of the tram services provided in those three towns.

What makes it special is three things: firstly, the history of the early buses and bus services in the area is included as an essential part of the story. An intriguing point here is that the Imperial Tramways, whose parent was the Bristol Tramways & Carriage Co., commenced bus services just before the First World War in order to pre-empt any competition which might arise inside its territory. The buses were, to use a modern term, 'cascaded' from the Bristol fleet.

In the past, so many tramway historians failed to record the bus operating activities of British tramway undertakings, thus implying that certain of the undertakings were moribund from the early days, when in fact they were pioneers in bus operation (Worcester is a case in point.)

The second feature of note is that the author has gained access to hitherto untapped archival evidence. Having found council minutes lacking in the necessary detail, a study of the Teesside Archive Correspondence Files yielded up advertising contract documents which gave important details of the car numbers. Once again we see how important evidence may be found in unexpected places!

Thirdly, the author adopts a logical and chronological approach to the subject in question, and although he does not prove *everything*, he leaves the reader with a very clear picture of the peculiar way in which Middlesbrough Corporation dealt with the renumbering of its fleet. A job well done! Here is an article casting new light on a previously unsolved mystery and sensibly reviewing the whole transport picture in the area concerned in order to illustrate the rationale behind the actions of one of the tramway operators.

ARP

Tramway Review is published four times a year and is available by post from the address above.

Great Orme Tramway

Some Recent History

The opening of the 2001 season saw the Great Orme Tramway closed, and the introduction of a bus service in replacement. Elsewhere in Llandudno, the former Marine Drive Tour was being operated under contract. The recent history of the cable tramway and Marine Drive circular service combine elements of *déjà-vu* and unusual fact.

Summary of Early History

The tramway opened in two stages in July 1902 and July 1903, and like many cable worked lines it eventually suffered a run-away accident which caused closure and the dissolution of the operating company. Service was restarted under another company, and the line passed into the ownership of the Llandudno Urban District Council in April 1948. LUDC was already a seasonal bus operator (of the Marine Drive Circular Tour which had commenced in July 1928), but in May 1951 inaugurated a stage-carriage bus service, using two Foden vehicles, over much of the lower section of the tramway. This allowed winter operation of the cable trams to be withdrawn. The bus route began in Lloyd Street (Town Hall) and ran over a less steep and slightly wider road than the trams as far as Black Gate, and afterwards ran parallel to the cable line before turning off near Halfway to terminate at St. Tudno's church.

On 1st April 1974, LUDC was superseded by Aberconwy District Council. The bus and tram undertaking carried on as before, but as a result of deregulation the operating entity became known as Grwp Aberconwy. The stage-carriage bus service was transferred to Crosville Wales (service 73) and is now operated by Arriva. During the nineties, a new visitor attraction (Great Orme Mines) was established on the Great Orme. At first served by private Freight-Rover mini-buses (a free service) from the Summit, the mines were later served by Aberconwy buses running on a dedicated service from the Cenotaph (Prince Edward Square) which was the traditional terminal point of the Marine Drive Circular Tour. Two Dennis buses were painted in a special livery for this service. At the end of the 1976 season Aberconwy disposed of three 25 year old Guy coaches, and purchased two relatively new Bedford VAS coaches.

By the late nineties the VAS coaches had themselves become old, and some slightly newer versions of the same model joined the fleet. The buses were now repainted from a grey and red livery (adopted in 1975 by Aberconwy) to a dark blue colour scheme based on that used by the trams.

There had been cosmetic changes to the cars in the nineties, with the adoption of a "Victorian" dark blue livery, large fleet numbers, and the application of names to each car. To allow the cars to operate with only one attendant, waist-high gates were installed on the platforms and radio communication was adopted instead of the telegraphic signalling system which sent a signal to the winding house via overhead trolley wires. After this, the overhead wires and poles were left in situ, some poles surviving as this is written, but the contact wire having been removed piecemeal. The trolleys on the lower section cars were retained as an "ornament".

Recent History

Just before the line's 97th birthday, on May Bank Holiday Monday 1999, a serious accident took place. One of the Bedford VAS coaches owned by Grwp Conwy (Aberconwy D.C. had become Conwy C.B.C. by now (1)) had taken passengers on one of the Great Orme Tours. When descending the hill, the driver turned right at Black Gate and entered the narrow and very steep road taken by the tramway to its lower terminus, despite the warning road signs forbidding entry to all traffic during the hours of tramway operation. Car 5 had just left the lower station, and seeing the bus approaching the driver signalled the winding house to stop. The bus, however, was unable to stop, and collided head on with stationary tramcar no.5.

For this to have happened to a vehicle in common ownership with the trams was a serious matter indeed, notwithstanding the failure of the driver to obey the warning notice at Black Gate. The accident brought about the end of bus operation by the undertaking. The Marine Drive Circular Tours were now handed to a "contractor". (See later)

During the 2000 season a further accident took place on the tramway, this time on the upper section. Here the line is laid in ballast, and at the half-way loop the cars set the points for their return journey by the passage of their wheels. The points were pushed across by the wheels, and a counterbalanced lever, housed in a wire cage to prevent unauthorised tampering, held the point tongues firmly in place. For once this mechanism failed and the two cars found themselves on collision course at the passing place. As a result, the upper section was closed and hired buses were used for the remainder of the season.

Both the Marine Drive Circular and the cable trams might have passed into history at this point. As recorded in *Newsletter 21*, page 9, the traditional terminus of the Circular buses was removed by the construction of a new road layout in 2000, although a lay-by close to the Pier entrance was provided for buses and coaches. The Marine Drive Circular is still

operated from this lay-by, and is operated by Alpine, who retain a booking kiosk nearby. Alpine is the successor to Creams and Royal Red of Llandudno, but now the fleetname of Hughes Brothers, (Llanrwst and Trefriw). One vehicle used on the Marine Drive since the demise of the Conwy owned fleet is from the erstwhile Creams fleet, and is some 25 years old. Pride of place, however, must go to a Leyland Tiger Cub with a Duple Britannia body, new in 1958, and painted in the current dark green "Alpine" livery.

Alpine maintain a fleet of double deckers (many ex Crosville) at a depot in Builder Street, Llandudno, for use on school bus services, and the same depot runs the Guide Friday "Llandudno and Conwy Tour" with an ex London Country double decker, a service commenced in 1995.

But, what of the trams? The troubles have come at an opportune time, as North Wales is currently in Objective One category, able to receive major grants from the EU for important works of infrastructure. In its 99th year, the tramway is closed for refurbishment which includes work on the cars, track and the renewal of the Halfway winding house and car depots. What was a collection of rather utilitarian buildings of 1902 vintage has been swept away and in May 2001 a new complex of more pleasant aspect was nearing completion. Refurbished trucks have arrived for car 4 (currently at the lower station) and Car 6 has been returned from refurbishment off-site.

(1) Aberconwy District Council and Colwyn Bay Council merged in local government changes on 1st April 1996 to become the Conwy County Borough Council

ILLUSTRATIONS

This Page

Crosville Wales Mercedes minibus on route 73 (now Arriva) at Black Gate. Here the tramway enters a narrow road flanked by high walls, prohibited to all traffic during hours of tramway operation. all motor vehicles take the road to the right which descends less steeply. The 1999 accident was caused by a bus descending the steep hill to the left.

Opposite Page, Top

The May Bank Holiday 1999 collision, involving the Bedford VAS-Duple coach A609 XFM (previously Cooper, Stockton Heath) and tram no.5, outside the "King's Head", only a few yards outside the lower tramway station.

Opposite Page, Middle

Half Way Station (lower) showing the former tram shed. To demolish this, car 5 was taken away. The defunct trolleys are seen in this view, retained for effect, but the contact wire has been dismantled.

Opposite Page, Bottom

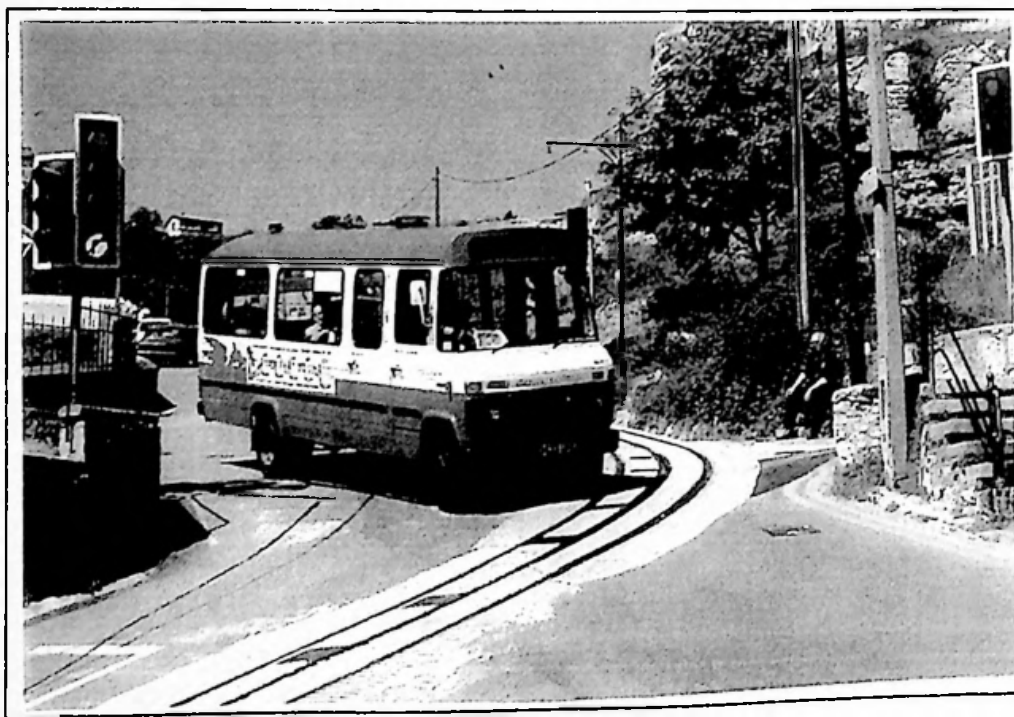
To replace the council owned buses, hired-in vehicles such as this were used. REP 999N is a Plaxton bodied Bedford of 1975, seen in late 1999.

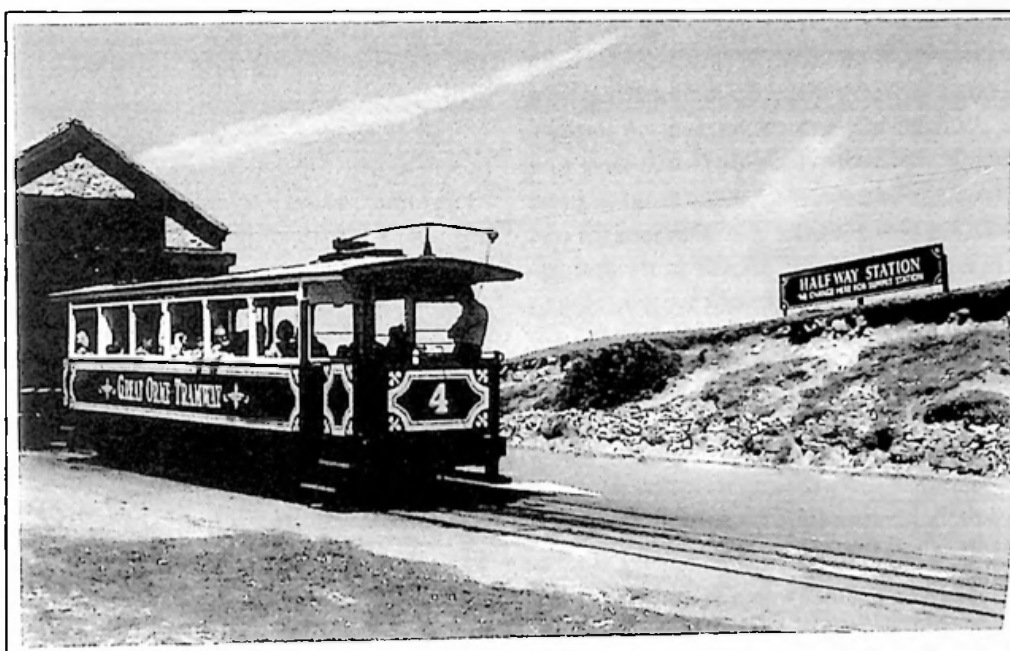
All the above photographs taken by Ron Phillips.

COVER PICTURE

A mid-fifties view of Prince Edward Square, the erstwhile terminus of the LUDC Circular Tour. Buses Shown are two Guy Vixens of the AJC 550-2 batch of 1951, one of which is now preserved, and bonnetted Commer JC 4557 of 1937 with roll-back roof. Note the Triumph Mayflower saloon on the left. The current lay-by terminus for buses is to the left out of sight, opposite the pier entrance. The tower on the hill is a camera obscura.

(from a post-card)





RACEHORSES

on the ROAD

by Dr. John Tolson

Before the coming of the railway, there was really only one practical way for racehorses to travel to and from race meetings. They walked with their grooms, trainer or owner — depending on the latter's position in the social spectrum — taking with them all they might need on their journey, - food, rugs, and some form of basic medication. They were very much at the mercy of the weather, while the stabling they might find along their route could be both primitive and expensive. Moreover, if the horse was favourite in a particular race, it could be as much at risk from the betting fraternity or the unscrupulous owner of a rival horse, as from any natural hazard. A journey from Newmarket to Epsom took from five days to a week, and from Goodwood to Doncaster up to three weeks, depending on the trainer's instructions for rest and exercise en route. After arrival at its destination, a top class horse might require a week or two to prepare for an important race, although this was not always possible.

The majority of horses raced locally, or in relatively compact regional circuits, in which they could walk easily between the meetings selected by their owners at weekly or fortnightly intervals, although distances of 50 to 100 miles were very common. But even in the eighteenth century, some racehorses did travel considerable distances. In 1776, Gimcrack travelled to Paris to win a wager that he could cover 22½ miles in an hour, whilst four years later, the celebrated Eclipse raced at Newmarket, Nottingham, York, Lincoln and Guildford, before running again at Newmarket. Examination of the *Racing Calendar* for the period shows that such exploits were by no means isolated incidents, but it is perhaps more interesting to examine what happened in the early years of the Railway Age.

For many people, this was ushered in by the opening of the Stockton & Darlington Railway in 1825, and the Liverpool & Manchester Railway five years later. Certainly the latter had some horseboxes shortly after its opening. But of far more significance for long-distance travelling was the opening of the Grand Junction Railway in July 1837. In 1836 there were only two miles of railway in London; but five years later it was possible to travel from the capital to Darlington, Bridgwater, Lancaster and Southampton,

with similar links between major provincial centres, even if some of the routes were rather circuitous to modern eyes.

The railways revolutionised travel for horses and enabled them to reduce their journey times over long distances from weeks or days to hours. This occurred because the relatively wealthy required to carry their horses and carriages by train to enable them to continue their onward journey without delay. For many years, horseboxes were often far better than the railway carriages in which the lower orders of human travellers were carried, and right to the end of their regular use, were always classed as passenger stock. Racehorses certainly benefited from this development, but research has shown that this did not generally change the habits of their owners, as the cost of railway travel, when the incidentals had been included, could be quite considerable, and the prize money at less prestigious and remote meetings rarely exceeded £50 a race during the first half of the nineteenth century.

In 1836 occurred two high-profile events in the racing world. The first reflected the normal practice of the day, even at the highest level, while the other initiated a relatively short-lived, and often overrated, trend for the high-speed 'vanning' of racehorses by road. John Scott, the Malton trainer, sent his three year old filly, Cyprian, on an epic journey. Having raced on her home course on 14 April, she then walked some 200 miles to Epsom to win The Oaks on 20 May. Cyprian then returned north to win the Northumberland Plate at Newcastle-upon-Tyne on 22 June 1836, having completed a journey of almost 300 miles between her two triumphs.

At this time the rich, but often financially stretched, Lord George Bentinck, was looking for a way to revive his flagging fortunes. He was convinced that his horse, Elis, could win the St Leger at Doncaster, but he had to drive up the odds to at least 12 to 1. So he kept Elis both training at Goodwood and competing in full view of the touts, until less than a week before the big race. Meanwhile, as part of his plan, he was having a special van built in secret to carry two horses in safety and comfort at speed along the turnpike roads. By now Bentinck had the odds he wanted — for how could he get Elis from Goodwood to Doncaster in four or five days, when the accepted journey time was between 15 and 20 days? But the van, hauled by relays of six horses, was to average 80 miles a day, and it got Elis and his travelling companion, The Drummer, to Doncaster on the evening before the St Leger, even with a day of rest and workouts at Lichfield. Elis did win the St Leger, and Bentinck was £12,000 richer, at a direct cost of about £250 for vehicle and post horses.

So he then decided to 'van' all his racehorses — and he had a fair number — on all their journeys, even if, as his trainer, John Kent, once remarked, they were worth less than the horses pulling the van. But with vehicle costs about £120 to £160, and post horses at about 2/- per pair per mile, the practice was quite expensive, and only available for the more wealthy patrons. Nevertheless, the vogue for long-distance 'vanning' continued for a number of years, particularly in the north of England and in Scotland, where cross-country rail communications — except between Edinburgh and Glasgow — were relatively slow in developing, and the time between certain race meetings was insufficient for the horses to walk. But even when Bentinck moved his main base from Danebury, near Stockbridge, to Goodwood in 1841, and more than doubled its distance from the nearest railway, he was quite prepared to bear the cost of a return road journey in excess of 40 miles for each racehorse he moved, until June 1846, only months before he totally withdrew from racing.

Although the basic costs of transporting horses by rail were not excessive on straightforward journeys, and horseboxes were available virtually on demand at major stations and at 24 hours notice at all others, these were geared to the needs of travellers driving to and from the railhead. But the incidental expenses of a rail journey of any length and complexity for a racehorse soon pushed up the cost, even without any thought of insuring any horse worth over £40 against accident. A journey for two horses and their attendants from Newmarket to the Chester and Oswestry area in October 1844, with a similar return to Ascot, cost £51-6-0 — a not inconsiderable sum particularly as the horses had no success at all in their races.

Small wonder then that most of the less affluent owners continued to walk their horse between stables and meetings. The 1845 Grand National winner, Cure All, was made to walk over 130 miles from stables near Grimsby to Liverpool and back after his win. At this date, a short ferry trip over the Humber to Hull would have given access to the railway, by which Liverpool could have been reached in eight hours, instead of as many days. The impecunious Thomas Parr, who was renowned for taking unfancied horses and turning them into consistent winners by making them race as often as possible on all types of course, did make great use of the railways in the 1850s, to enable horses to race on successive days at York and Abingdon, or at Derby, then at Weymouth. But when he visited Aberystwyth and the nearest suitable railhead was at Shrewsbury, over 80 miles away, the horses had to walk, or even trot, to the course, particularly when the next meeting was at Worcester, only

five days later.

But over the next sixty years, as the network came within two or three miles of almost every racecourse, the railways were to reign supreme as transporters of an ever-growing number of racehorses over both long and short distances, although some owners still felt it less stressful to walk or 'van' their horses for journeys where speed or time were not of the essence. But by the end of the First World War the attrition of the railways' monopoly had begun and motor horseboxes came onto the roads in ever-increasing numbers — including those provided by railway companies as feeders to their own services. A further sixty years on, road transport of racehorses again reigned supreme — this time on wheels, not hooves — but that is another story.

One or two questions have been put to Dr Tolson; indeed, readers may have others — this whole article was inspired by an innocuous question raised with the Editor by John Dunabin. Dr Tolson has replied :

- 1 In early railway days, having to walk the racehorse across London, between the railway termini, was not felt to be a problem; it provided exercise or relaxation. I do not know of any 'nobbling' or accidents which occurred to racehorses crossing London
- 2 Sunday travel was not a major issue. There were minimal race meetings on Saturdays until about the late 1860s. Monday meetings were more numerous; but generally Sunday was set aside as a rest and 'run-out' day. (Lord George Bentinck's Elis spent Sunday at Lichfield).
- 3 There will have been preplanning of routes. But generally, unless they were quite poor, the owners will not have travelled with their racehorses, which would be under the control of a groom. (Jockeys, unless they were very junior, and tied to a particular owner, would have a journey pattern quite dissimilar to the horses they might ride at various meetings). No doubt some pre-booking of accommodation at the destination might be necessary, as for major meetings this could be tight (at least for the upper classes). But for horses and the lower classes, en route, there were plenty of inns. Biggleswade, for example had over 60 inns in 1850.

larly in the case of coaching inns, operated on a 24 hour basis. Since the later eighteenth century, the number of rooms had increased dramatically, and as everyone lived in a horse-based society there was always plenty of stabling available. In a major town, a single inn might command stabling for 200 horses.

However, John Kent, Bentinck's trainer, commented on the often poor accommodation en route, but gave no indication whether anything had been pre-booked, although the actual journey had been meticulously planned. In fact, I have not seen in any history a specific reference to prebooking accommodation. Moreover, 'roughing it', walking long

distances through the night to the races, or even on official business, were felt to be normal. Even Gladstone was ejected from the Liverpool coach in Birmingham as a young man, and had to walk behind his luggage at 4 a.m. to another inn to catch the connecting vehicle.

As a postscript, Dr Tolson adds : Are we not more obsessed nowadays with booking ahead, not only accommodation, but also train tickets, than we were 30 or 40 years ago? So we must beware of extrapolating our views (and fears) into an era when these posed no major problem. Similarly, horseboxes and carriage trucks were available at most major railway stations and at 24 hours notice at even the most remote location.

History on a Postcard

Long Haul Delivery 100 years ago



Dr Tolson's article above explains some of the mysteries surrounding the transport of horses: the post card above invites further questions about horse drawn transport. The card is a modern one, received through the post in May 2001, the writer apologising that on his holiday in Sorrento, Italy, he had been unable to find any transport-oriented postcards. His apology was unnecessary, for this early photograph of Sorrento's Piazza Tasso must be dated as circa 1900 by the presence of the narrow gauge horse tramway laid in what appear to be slabs of volcanic rock. This line stretches

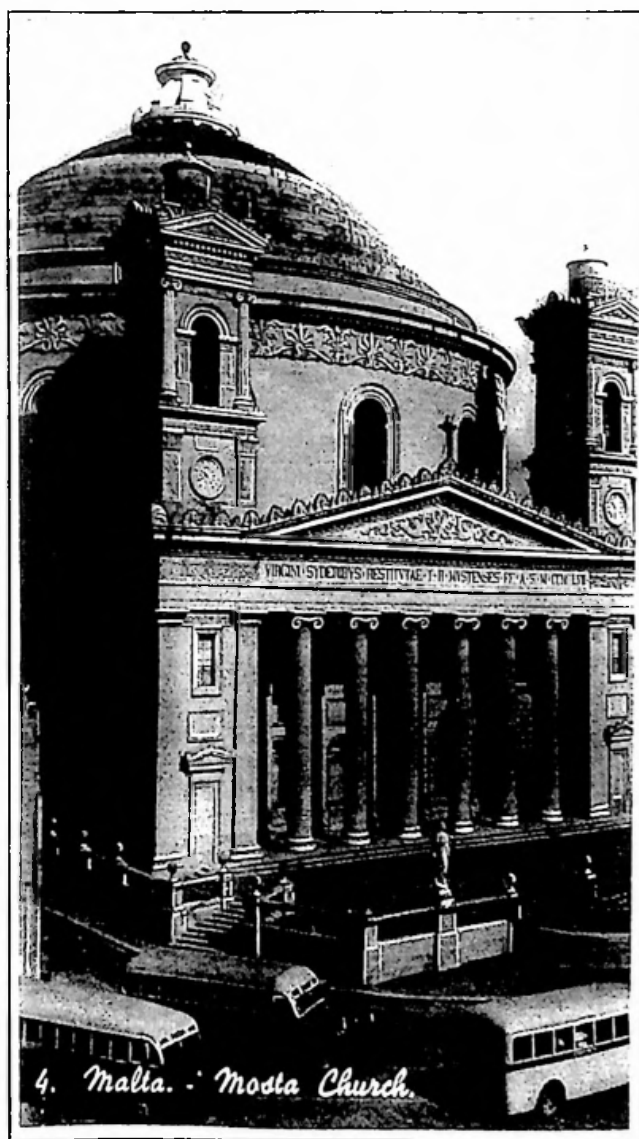
away into the distance towards the Railway Station.

The popularity of Sorrento with English tourists is witnessed by the shop on the left, labelled "Wood Works", and the horse-drawn van right of centre is labelled "Maple & Co. London." The container is clearly roped onto the local cart. So who can trace its journey, presumably by road from Maple's warehouse to a London rail-head, and by road from Sorrento's narrow gauge station to the town centre? Was it carrying furniture from London, or was it used to transfer Italian made goods to the English store?

Why are Malta's Buses so Old ?

Visitors to the island of Malta never fail to notice the buses. Not only do they seem to appear on every road and be parked in every village, but they are also very, very old. A closer examination will reveal that there are a few new ones and probably more "very old" ones, with most being 20-30 years old at least. If you are knowledgeable about buses, be prepared to find, among the familiar shapes you were once used to seeing, some vehicles whose origin is, to say the least, difficult to fathom.

There are plenty of postcards to buy showing buses, there is a poster, there is a book, and even "objets d'art". At one end of the spectrum there are cheap tourist souvenirs emblazoned with buses, at the other end hand-made one-off wooden or ceramic ornaments of normal control buses complete with luggage and passengers. Why is the bus seemingly part of the folklore and culture of Malta?



To answer this we must look at the road transport history of the island. It began in the usual way. There was a railway and a tramway with three routes before the motor age arrived. When the motor age did arrive, various individuals purchased motor buses, and began to run along the established traffic corridors, competing with the railway and the tramways. The little buses were owner-driven, carried boy conductors, and their running costs were very low.

The tramway was owned by a British company. It was in fact the company which constructed it. The contractor was left "holding the baby" and continued to run the tramway whilst it remained profitable. When faced with strong bus competition, the tramway was closed down and the workers sacked. There was some bitterness about this locally. The private bus owners continued as before, but Overseas Motor Transport, a British company set up to introduce bus services in various colonies and other overseas territories where Britain held sway, brought in a fleet of Thornycroft buses with Hall Lewis bodywork to (it declared) give the island a well run and efficient bus service. The trams gone, the independent bus owners were now able to fight the buses of the OMT subsidiary known as the British Motor Company. The fight was short, as soon as it became apparent that the BMC was not going to get its own way (i.e. a monopoly of bus transport in Malta) the company took its buses away to another operation in Egypt.

The Maltese government was unable to sort out the road transport mess because it had two problems to solve. One was political; an election had had to be postponed because a pastoral letter issued by the Roman Catholic church was seen as an interference with the democratic process. The second was that the ailing railway which had outlived the trams, and which was owned by the government, was overdue for closure. In view of what had happened to the tramway employees, and that the postponed election was still to be held, it was deemed necessary to find jobs for or give pensions to all the railway employees. This was a remarkable action in 1930 !

After the dust had settled and the election was over, the government decided to introduce a bus licensing structure. This was such that it did not interfere with the individual ownership of the buses, which was akin to that of motor taxis, with almost all the buses owner-driven.

Mostar Church, a well photographed Maltese monument and an important bus terminus. The picture dates from the fifties, and shows, left to right, a bus built on a psv chassis purchased from the UK, another built on a WW2 military chassis, and a third that had survived from the pre-war period.

During the Second World War many buses were damaged or destroyed. After 1945, a motor dealer, Gasan, imported a quantity of American Ford chassis, and for a short period was a fleet owner, but things soon reverted to individual ownership. There was constant government control of routes and services, administered by the police, and bus owners were required to paint buses in one of three colour schemes which indicated the part of the island which they served. Eventually that scheme was dropped and all buses were painted green and white.

The growth of tourism in Malta created a problem. More luxurious buses with luggage carrying capacity were required to move tourists from the airport to the hotels. None such existed... There were just a few "private hire" buses which a few owners had, painted in a cream livery. From about 1970, an ever growing fleet of "coaches" has been built up, using mainly ex British vehicles purchased in small batches at second hand. Some coaches were purchased for use as route buses too. These former British coaches had poor ventilation for the Maltese climate, and it has been necessary to equip most of them with air conditioning. Ownership of the coaches was not by individuals, but by small companies, many of which were associated with the hotel business. Like the buses, the coaches were required to carry a standard livery (blue), although fleetnames were carried by some. This rule was relaxed in the 1990s, and coaches now carry distinctive liveries.

The Maltese government has tried on several occasions to reform bus transport, but is always faced by the same dilemma. If a "rationalised" scheme is introduced, what will happen to the bus owners? There are, essentially, twice as many buses as are needed for a good daily service. Owners work to a fixed time-

table on a one-day-on, one-day-off basis. They do not regard "compensation" as an acceptable idea. Most of the bus owners are now second or third generation owner-drivers, and they do not want to give up their livelihood or their lifestyle to work for others.

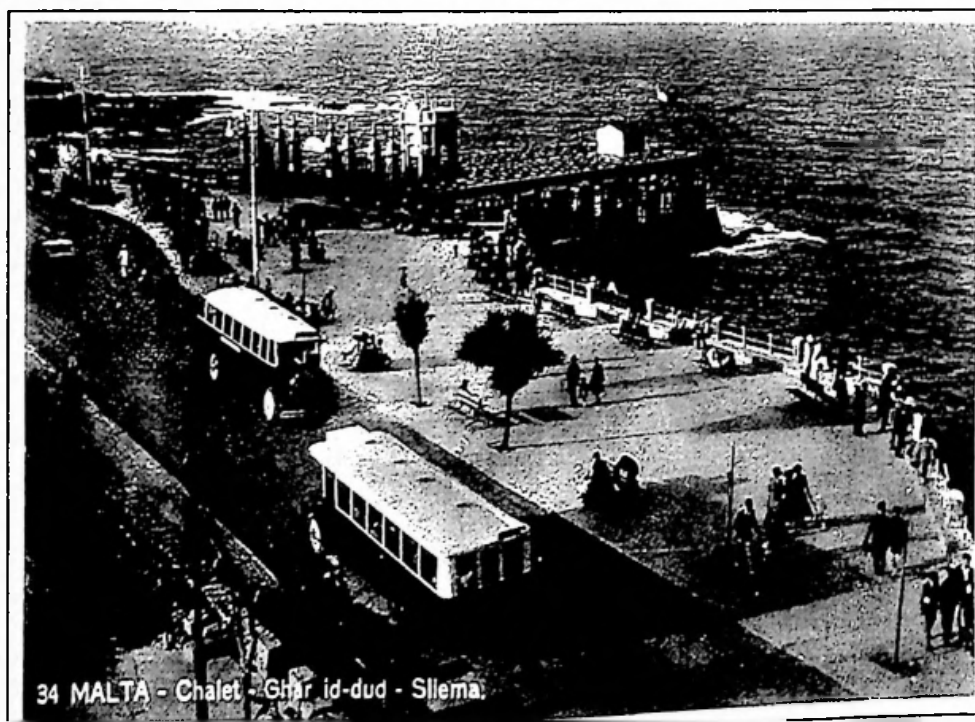
The majority of the present day buses (as well as the coaches) are second-hand from Britain, and most are twice the age of buses found in the poorer parts of Europe. (Of course, one could say they only work half the time, but that is not the point) The government cannot force the drivers to spend huge sums of money on new buses, and the owners would not agree to driving subsidised vehicles as this would mean a loss of freedom, as there would be rules to observe regarding the vehicle and its use. Hence the older vehicles carry on running, provided they pass the necessary safety checks. A lot are like the proverbial hammer with two new heads and three new handles. Many have had new bodywork built by Maltese coachbuilders, and there is even a type of bus built in Malta at the Dockyard. Many carry an array of badges which mislead the observer into thinking the bus is an AEC or a Leyland, when in fact it is a Bedford or a Dodge.

As far as we know, the Maltese bus industry is unique. Long may it remain so !

Bibliography:

The Malta Railway, J. Bonnici & M. Cassar. (1988)
The Malta Tramway & Barraca Lift, J. Bonnici & M. Cassar (1991)

BELOW: A prewar postcard of Sliema sea front, showing two Hall Lewis bodied Thornycrofts of the British Motor Company - owned by Overseas Motor Transport.



34 MALTA - Chalet - Għar id-dud - Sliema.

BEDFORD

1939-1945

Wartime Success

At the outbreak of the Second World War Bedford had just introduced the "O" range, as described in part 1 (Newsletter 21). The Luton factory with its high volume production line for 2 ton to 4 ton mass produced vehicles was now asked to produce a series of vehicles suitable for both military and civilian use. A new combined cab and bonnet structure, the most noticeable feature of which was the flat front with plain wire mesh grille and which incorporated the headlamps, replaced the pre-war "O" series cab which at that time had only just been introduced. The chassis, engine and transmission remained as before, and the new models were classified OWL (lorries) and OWB (buses). In addition, a short wheelbase version for use as a tractor was classified OXC.

Many of the above mentioned chassis were supplied for military use, the OXC in particular being made available for the forces equipped with military style wheels and tyres, and many were equipped with canvas covered truck or van bodies. Specifically for the forces were a series designated "MW", these were short wheelbase light trucks, ideal for use as large pick-ups, field ambulances, troop carriers etc. They had military style wheels and tyres and basic canvas topped cabs.

As the civilian market was restricted by the wartime regulations, and the military need for light trucks was limited, Bedford was asked to construct a number of trucks of a heavier nature than had hitherto been made at Luton. These were vehicles with high ground clearance, forward control, and four wheel drive. There were several wheelbases available. Model designation for this series was QL, the initial letter indicating "Quad" = 4 wheel drive.

Although the number of models being produced had increased, there was still a large degree of standardisation of parts. This is illustrated by the "mix and match" OY series for military use, which was a version of the OW fitted with military axles.

Wartime Buses

Like the pre-war range of "off-the-peg" buses and coaches offered by Bedford in conjunction with Duple Motor Bodies of Hendon, the wartime OWB bus was produced in very large numbers for all three services, civilian needs, and for use in some colonial territories where there was an urgent need for basic

passenger vehicles. Duple built the "utility" style body, but Roe and S.M.T. also built bodies to the same design. The Bedford was the only single deck bus available in Britain in the 1942-1945 period.

The Ministry of War Transport also flirted with the idea of building articulated buses using the OXC tractor as the prime mover. The standard MoWT body was a dual entrance 40 seater. Experience proved these vehicles to be hazardous to drive in icy conditions, and mostly they were used for on-site transport at airfields, ordnance factories etc.

After the war, many ex Army Bedfords were crudely converted for passenger use in devastated parts of Europe and further afield (in places such as Ceylon, Singapore and Hong Kong). In due course, many lost their crudely adapted lorry bodies to receive locally made passenger bodies. One of the most interesting conversions in this genre were the 4 wheel drive QL chassis used by Southport Corporation to provide a bus service across sand between Southport and Ainsdale Beach. These were fitted with locally built roofless and windowless bodies ("boats"), and a few, with the front wheel drive removed, were later used on a town tour on ordinary roads.....a fifties equivalent of the toastrack tramcar.

Licence to Acquire

A civilian operator during the war could not simply buy a new lorry when he felt the need to. The Bedford publicity machine issued a brochure of the wartime OWL series, describing the product as "A New War-time BEDFORD for essential civilian transport." This gave advice on how to go about placing an order, stating:

"Production is limited and distribution is governed by the Ministry of War Transport. An operator who wishes to acquire a new vehicle must first prove that the vehicle is necessary to carry on essential work. 'Essential work' covers, in addition to war production, such services as food and milk transport, coal delivery and the like. Application should be made to the Ministry of War Transport, or to the Regional Transport Commissioner, stating the make and type of vehicle you wish to purchase. If the need is justified, the Ministry will issue a 'Licence to acquire,' and if the vehicle is a Bedford it will be supplied through your local Bedford dealer"

Illustrations appear overleaf showing some of the principal wartime models. Older readers will find many familiar shapes. Although Bedford were not the only manufacturer of trucks in wartime Britain, and the range was very well established before 1939, it could be said that the wartime period made the Bedford marque a familiar sight in every part of Britain and many countries abroad.

The illustrations on this page show the following wartime models:

1. MWC
2. MWD/MWG
3. MWR
4. MWT/MWV
5. OXD
6. OXC

7. OXC

8. OXD

9. OXC

No.8 is shown as a mobile canteen labelled as "Gift of H.M. Queen", presumably referring to H.M. Queen Elizabeth (now the Queen Mother). such is in the tradition of the gifting of military vehicles in the first World War by aristocrats and tycoons.

