

# Newsletter

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The Roads & Road Transport History Association

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## The Vestry Horse

Taken from *The Horse World of London* by W J Gordon  
(published by The Religious Tract Society, 1893)

The Parcel Post led us to digress among the male horses; let us return to the heavy brigade. But we must be clear as we go, and as there happens to be a class of cart-horse holding a position by himself, let us deal with him forthwith. Although he is employed for the saving of money, he is to a large extent of superior quality, owing to the pressure of appearances. With him there is, to put it gently, just a little more than a suspicion of "nobility compels", and that honourable compulsion is at the expense of the community.

The thirteen hundred thousand cart-loads of refuse removed from London in a year require a small horde of about 1,500 horses to deal with them, and of these more than half now belong to the vestries and district Boards of Works. What may be called the 'municipal horse' is really a good cart-horse. Any approach to 'the vanner' will not suit the vestries. His load varies too much, even with similar stuff, for any risks to be run. On a wet day he may have three tons behind him,

including the vehicle; on a fine day, the absence of the water will take hundredweights off the weight, to say nothing of the improvement in the state of the road.

Some of these vestry horses we have seen weigh over 18 cwt., and though we have heard of a few heavier, we heard of none lighter than 13½ cwt., the average working out at 17 cwt., rather over than under. Such horses are now all English, coming from almost every county, direct from the farmer or through the dealer, and with very few exceptions they are bought in their sixth year.

No foreign horse will live long in the London dustcart; his feet will not stand the hard roads. He has been tried and failed miserably, giving way in the forelegs, having strained the back tendons, with the constant jar of his feet, as he has plodded along the granite, asphalt, or wood. And this has been particularly noticeable in the City service, where the only stretch of macadam is that between Lett's Wharf and Blackfriars Bridge, which is not in

the City at all, although it leads to the City dust-yard.

And it is not every sound horse, however big and handsome, that will suit the vestry. He has to possess an accomplishment which he is little used to display in the country. It will not do for him to be of the vestigial nulla retrorsum school, he must not only go forward, he must above all things be able to 'back', and he must back as readily as he advances. When he is bought he is tried and drilled in this backing; and he must not only back, but keep in his legs as he does so, for if not his career will be cut short by having feet run over, which is the commonest accident to which he is liable when standing in the London streets. The performances of some of these animals in turning and backing are remarkable. There was one mare, a year or so ago, who used to work in Bucklersbury, where it often becomes necessary for her to turn round. Now, Bucklersbury is a narrow thoroughfare, and to turn in it, the mare had to get on to the pavement, in which, here and there, there are cellar lights; and it was quite a lesson to watch her come round, carefully picking her way so as not to tread on the glass lights, which she had learnt to consider dangerous.

Many of the horses are mares, but most of them are geldings; most of these are bays, many of them are roans, and the blue roans are said to last the best, which may be a mistake, although there is little doubt that the rat-tailed ones of any colour last the longest. The average working life in the vestry service is eight years; when they are sold out of it, they fetch on the average 8*l* if alive, and 1*l* 18*s* if dead. But their death rate is not high; indeed, among the City horses, which number between eighty and ninety, only one horse has died in every three months during the last twenty years.

The average price now paid for them is 75*l.*, and a few cost over 80*l.*; but although London has many fine animals among the vestry studs, such as those owned by Marylebone, Battersea, St George's Hanover Square, and Kensington, -- the four prize-winners at a recent Cart-horse Parade -- there are some we have heard of worth three figures, though the value of heavy draught horses is always on the rise.

It is rather puzzling to find that whilst the amount of land going out of cultivation increases, the number of horses supposed to work on that land also increases; but the solution is that not only are horse implements taking the place of men, but that it pays the farmer better to breed horses than to plough with them, particularly as the more he breeds the better price he seems to sell them at. The farmer suffers as much as most men from foreign competition, but as a horse breeder it is by foreign competition that he benefits. And according to the users of horseflesh he benefits most by the increasing number of horse and agricultural shows. For some years now, for instance, the Americans have been shire horses of good quality. Shows are plentiful, and at every show the American agent puts in an appearance, endeavouring at all cost to secure the prize-winners, and thus have the best of opinions to back up his own. His own judgment might land him in difficulties with his correspondents, but with the prize certificate he is safe. 'In any court of law he would get a verdict' we were told by one of the best judges of cart-horses in London; 'and he were to send his people a three-cornered horse, they couldn't quarrel with him!' But as this excellent method of picking out a good horse is not confined to

Americans, prize-winners fetch high prices; and even though the winners go out of the country, the farmer benefits by the price, and the country benefits by the breeding of good horses in the hope of obtaining that price.

And even beyond this the horse societies have certainly justified their existence in the prices now obtainable for breeding stock. Not long ago men wondered at a champion stallion like Enterprise of Cannock being sold for a thousand guineas; but since then we have had Prince William changing hands at fifteen hundred guineas; and now that price has been far exceeded in the case of Bury Victor Chief, the two-year-old shire stallion that was bought out of Huntingdonshire by Mr Wainwright, of Chapel-en-le-Frith, for the handsome sum of two thousand five hundred guineas -- 2,625*l.* for a draught horse, who is expected to pay for himself in three seasons, during which insurance will cover the risk!

But as we are not likely to meet with a thousand-five-hundred-guinea stallion in a vestry stable, we will say no more about him. When the five-year-old horse arrives in London, he almost invariably falls sick, and takes at least a week to become acclimatised and used to his surroundings. He is then exercised in backing, and when he has duly passed in this important part of his drill, he is put to light work for a week or so, bringing in a load a day. When he has acquired confidence and is thoroughly fit, he is placed in charge of a driver, with whom, if he gets on well, he will stay until horse or master leaves the service. Some consideration is needed in fitting a man with a horse. A short man with a choppy step will never be comfortable with a free striding horse, and a man who lounges along with a leisurely swing will always be in difficulties with a quick mover. The gait of horse and man must be somewhat similar, and as they begin to know and take an interest in each other, it is astonishing how much alike they will become in their movements.

The vestry horse, as a rule, begins work at six o'clock on a Monday morning, and knocks off at five o'clock on Saturday night, so that he has a full day's rest once a week. Every day he begins at six, and works about eleven hours, bringing in two or three loads during that time, each load averaging about two and half tons, taking the twelve months round; but most of his time is spent standing about accumulating this load, so that he cannot be said to be overworked.

He costs fifteen shillings a week to feed, but his provender varies in different stables. At Lett's Wharf the mixture consists of one truss each of hay and straw to three of clover and half a dozen bushels of oats; and of this each horse has forty pounds a day. He has breakfast at three o'clock in the morning and takes out a nosebag with him on each journey; sometimes he has a feed of beans or some special mixture; and invariably he has a bran mash to wind up the week on a Saturday night.

When he comes in wet and dirty, a bale of peat moss is broken for him to stand in, and in this he is thoroughly groomed before he goes to the stable; and he goes to his stall at word of command, knowing his place quite as well as the horsekeeper. And if he is a City horse, his stall is roomy and lofty -- no swinging bales for him, although he stands not on straw, but on the more economical peat. He lives in good condition, for his driver

gets a bonus of a sovereign or two every year for keeping him so; and he rarely comes to grief in the streets, owing to his driver being by his side to warn him when the paving changes and check him generally. And nails rarely trouble him, as he seldom is leg-weary, and he treads on such a gathering of rubbish in the dust-yard, that he gets quite experienced in dealing with the odds and ends that he meets with on the roadway.

**Editor's Note :** The City of London had its own form of governance. Outside the City, the Metropolitan Management Act, 1855, had brought together a disparate system into a more uniform one. Under this Act, 22 of the largest parishes, each functioned through its own elected Vestry. 56 smaller parishes were grouped together in 15 districts, under District Boards elected by the vestries of their constituent parishes. A central Metropolitan Board of Works was established, and its authority extended also to the City.

The London Government Act of 1888 created the London County Council, (from 1889), but left the City and the Vestries substantially untouched. Then, the London Government Act of 1899 divided London, (outside the City) into 28 Metropolitan Boroughs, including the City of Westminster and such Boroughs as Battersea, Bethnal Green, Camberwell, Chelsea, Finsbury, Fulham, Holborn, Lewisham, Poplar, St Pancras, Stoke Newington and Wandsworth. Westminster was created by the merger of the Vestries of St Margaret & St John, St George's Hanover Square, St James's, St Martin-in-the Fields and the District of the Strand Board of Works, together with the close of the Collegiate Church of Westminster. The changes under the 1899 Act came into effect on 1 November 1900.

## Ron Phillips

As those who were at the AGM will know, Ron has stepped down from the *Newsletter* editorial chair and it is very appropriate to say few words of appreciation at this point.

Our *Newsletter* serves an extremely important role, keeping members informed and entertained, particularly those who are unable to attend business meetings or the symposia. Ron has edited, produced and distributed the *Newsletter* since no.9, and has contributed many of the articles it contains too. We all owe him a debt of gratitude for the considerable work this has involved over the years.

But, Ron is not retiring from "active service" in the conventional sense. As many will know, he is very active within our Corporate Member, the PSV Circle, and especially within the Leyland Society. Here he writes for both *Leyland Torque* and *Leyland Journal* and has recently completed the first in a series of booklets: *Leyland Buses of Wigan Corporation*. His other, not inconsiderable, role is as curator of the substantial and important Leyland Archive. No doubt, news of matters Leyland will continue to find its way from Ron's pen to *Newsletter* in the future.

Those that know Ron will recognise some of his interests (in no particular order) – buses, Leylands, Spain and



Portugal. I couldn't find a suitable picture of a Spanish or Portuguese Leyland bus, but here is an unusual British one – a Gnu, delivered new to the City Coach Company of Brentwood, but seen here in after-life with Wrights Coaches of Southend.

The twin-steer Gnu and its single parent, the Leyland Panda – now, there's a subject for research!

David Harman

### ► 2004 Symposium

The R&RTHA's Symposium this year is a one-day event at the Midland Hotel, Derby on Saturday 30 October 2004. Its theme will be *Legislation and Road Transport in the 20th Century*. Please note the date now; fuller details and a booking form will be sent to all our members in about four to six weeks' time.

## Editorial

One of the great joys of attending a Roads & Road Transport History Association half-yearly meeting is the diverse, interesting, and often useful, information that one is presented with during the afternoon, and occasionally also in the Association business sessions in the morning. The high attendance (proportionately to the size of our membership and its geographical spread), indicates that the regular attenders appreciate the stimulation of these meetings.

But, for members who are not able to attend the half-yearly meetings, or the annual symposia – and they are the majority – *Newsletter* is the principal contact that they may have with the Association. One of its main aims is to convey at least some of the atmosphere of diversity and wide scope that the meetings are imbued with. Contributions of all sorts to *Newsletter* are welcome, provided that they have some discernible relevance to roads and road transport history – but that is quite an elastic definition. It is hoped, in future, to offer a better balance between buses and lorries than has been achieved in the past; not necessarily an easy objective to achieve, as there is much more written about buses than about lorries. (There might even be a little “positive discrimination” in favour of road freight history).

Contributions on other subjects, including road construction, vehicle manufacture, cycling, pedestrians, street furniture and motor cars, will be gladly received and allotted a share of space. Social aspects of road transport history will also be covered. Sources of historical information, available to researchers, will be publicised. More book reviews are envisaged; quite a lot of space is given up to reviews or book notices in this present issue. A gratifying feature is that some publishers are recognising *Newsletter* as a worthwhile (perhaps influential) journal in which to have books reviewed. Your Editor would welcome a flow of reports from members on books or articles suitable for review or mention, including books and articles written by our own members.

It is also strongly hoped to develop closer collaboration with as many of our corporate members as possible. *Newsletter* will happily publicise their interests and new ventures. Conversely, the Association looks to the corporate bodies to broadcast to their own members, advance notice of our Symposia and mention of our publications, -- in this issue, that Symposium papers from 2002 and 2003 have now been published, and par excellence, the *Companion to British Road Haulage History*. (Both receive further publicity on later pages). They could even suggest to their own members who may have an historical bent, that Associate Membership of this Association might interest them. \*

The book reviews in *Newsletter* are another feature that could potentially be of interest to our corporate members.

\* 2004 calendar year Associate Membership costs £15-00. Please write to our Hon Secretary:

Gordon Knowles,  
7 Squirrels Green,  
Great Bookham,  
Leatherhead, Surrey  
KT23 3LE

For corporate bodies the subscription is £30-00.

If publishers are sending us books for review, they have an expectation that the reviews will be disseminated fairly widely. Collectively, the corporate bodies in the R&RTHA have thousands of members. If the reviews in *Newsletter* are found to be generally reliable – which is a matter for recipients' judgment – then our “corporates” can gladly make use of them.

The specialisms (or, in many cases, the very opposite of specialism, -- the wide general interests) of our own Associate Members will be promoted in *Newsletter*, if they will let us know what they are currently researching, publishing, or simply are interested in. It can be either what they have written, or what they like to read – or both. Feedback to the *Chairman's Bulletin*, issued in January, showed that the autobiographical details provided by Bill Taylor, John Bennett and Robin Hannay, plus the notes on the British Motor Industry Heritage Trust Archive Collection, and the separate item on *Buses Worldwide*, were particularly well received. (So were John Edser's recollections of his time as a Lyons' van-boy). In this issue you can read about our corporate member, the Classic Atkinson Club, and how Jill Honeybun and her husband Ken nurtured this thriving group from virtually nothing; and also how Maurice Doggett whiled away his military posting to Aden reading *Commercial Motor*.

Letters to the Editor on all sorts of topics will be welcome. And other contributions, long or short, abstruse or seemingly banal, will receive editorial consideration. (In the end, of course, the Editor's decision is final).

Pre-empting one criticism of this *Newsletter* – not enough pictures! Must do better.

RA

### Future Newsletters

The target date for issue of No.38 is 26 August.

Contributions by 26 July, please.

Provisional target date for No.39 is 25 November.

Contributions by Saturday 30 October.

### ► NEWSLETTER No.36

There have been one or two problems with *Newsletter* No.36.

At the time that this *Newsletter*, No.37 has to go to press by a new production process, No.36, due to be produced under the old system, had not gone out.

Apologies for this; the position will be clarified in *Newsletter* no.38 (due out late August—see above).

Your new Editor, from this issue, is

Roger Atkinson,  
45 Dee Banks, Chester,  
CH3 5UU.  
tel: 01244 351066

## The Silbermann Affair

Members who were at the 2004 AGM in Coventry in February, and those who took reasonable care in reading the Minutes that were circulated to all members a week or two later, will have some idea of what this is about. But for those who are coming freshly to it, a brief resumé:

Last autumn, in an endeavour to promote sales of the *Companion to British Road Haulage History*, the Science Museum in London, its publishers, sent out details of the book to about 30 still-existing companies mentioned in it, inviting them to purchase copies at a discount, and enclosing a copy of the relevant page. One of these companies was Hallett Silbermann on page 187.

Mr John Silbermann telephoned the Museum on 17 November and said there were passages in the article about his company that were libellous. He gave his telephone number, but declined to write a letter.

Without consulting either the Association (as legally, "the Editor" of the *Companion*) or Professor John Armstrong, as co-ordinator of the actual Editors, the Museum engaged a prestigious, but expensive, firm of London solicitors, to act for the Museum (as Publishers). It was swiftly resolved during December, that Mr Silbermann would be given an unqualified apology and that, under the terms of an indemnity that had been signed by the Editors in 1999, the R&RTHA was liable to pay the cost of reprinting the relevant page in the book, recalling unsold copies, and distributing the amended pages to known purchasers. Mr Silbermann also requested a £500 donation to a nominated charity, and this was immediately agreed. He claimed no costs, nor did he engage a solicitor.

The Museum, which, on the advice of their solicitors, had conducted all the negotiations, told the Association, that under the indemnity, it would have to bear all the Museum's legal costs. The Association consulted a solicitor

early in January. His advice (verbally) was:

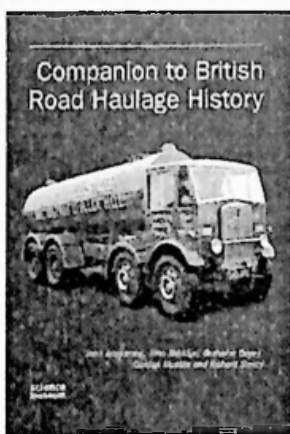
1. It was possibly arguable that the statement was not defamatory; but do not fight.
2. See Mr Silbermann, settle with him and get the London solicitors off your backs.

Too late; the London solicitors had already run up an enormous bill at the Association's expense, far dwarfing all other sums. The Association settled without demur the bills for reprinting etc., the charity donation and its own solicitor's bill.

The Editors, who are contrite at having committed the Association to the indemnity, have collectively made a very substantial contribution indeed. Members made aware of the situation at the AGM, or learning of it from the Minutes, have made donations, small and large, totalling hundreds of pounds. But there remain the London solicitors' fees demanded from the Association by the Science Museum. This huge amount is in dispute. To pay it in full would, even taking into account the contributions and donations, seriously damage the Association's reserves. The officers have taken steps to ensure that, if the bill does finally have to be paid, the Association's financial position will remain secure, although not unscathed.

It may be some while before the outcome is finally known. The Association is arguing that the Museum's engagement of their expensive solicitors was unnecessary from the outset; it was prolonged far too long after it was clear that there was no contest; and that it is highly damaging to the image of the Museum to put unwarranted financial stress on a small voluntary body from which the authors of a successful and worthy book had been drawn at no cost.

## The Companion



Obviously there are lessons to be learned from this cautionary tale (and a paragraph later takes up this theme), but what must still be recognised and acclaimed is that the *Companion to British Road Haulage History* is a marvellous book, produced by voluntary effort (and at significant personally borne expense) by the five Editors, led by Professor John Armstrong. Richard Storey, one of the Editors, was a

speaker at our 2003 Colloquium in Chester. He told us how it came to fruition, and if you did not manage to get to that Colloquium, you can read about "Producing the 'Companion'" in the now-published Colloquium papers, announced later in this Newsletter. If you have not bought the *Companion* itself, do buy it. A glance was taken at it in the "Chairman's Bulletin" issued in January this year. Ken Swallow pointed out the variety of fascinat-

ing entries he had found for his native Liverpool.

Order the *Companion* through your bookshop, or from:  
**Gazelle Book Services, Lancaster.**  
 Tel: 01524 68765.

It is a Science Museum publication (NMSI Trading Ltd), with ISBN 1-9700747 46 4. Retail price £39.95.

If there are members who would still like to make a donation as, whatever the outcome, the Association's reserves are likely to have taken a knock, please think of what the Association is achieving, rather than dwelling on the thought that your money may be laundered (indirectly) to a wholly undeserving legal firm. Donations are treated as anonymous; a cheque in favour the R&RTHA should be sent to our Treasurer:

**M I Caldicott, 7 Priory Dene,  
 47 Cavendish Road,  
 Bournemouth  
 BH1 1RA**

See also a later page where various favourable reviews of the *Companion* are noted.



## Colloquium and Symposium Papers

In the *Chairman's Bulletin* in January, it was mentioned that there had been difficulties in publishing the papers that were presented at the Symposium in Derby in 2002 and the Colloquium in Chester in 2003. The difficulties have been overcome; both have now been published. Members who attended either event should have received, a couple of months ago, a copy of the papers for that event. They are available to our own members, and to members of any of our corporate bodies, at these (post-free) prices:

- "Learning from History"** £4-00  
(Symposium at Derby, 15 October 2002)  
**"A Medley of Thoughts"** £2-50  
(Colloquium at Chester, 1 November 2003)

Please send your cheque, in favour of the R&RTHA, to our member, who has been responsible for production of the papers:

**David Harman, 24 Frankfield Rise,  
Tunbridge Wells TN2 5LE**

Both the publications are A4 size, bound and stapled in a soft-card cover, 28 and 14 pages.

**"Learning from History – Current Transport issues that have Historic Roots"** comprises:

- The Address by our President, Garry Turvey CBE,  
"Learning from History – Why are we here?"  
David Holding (University of Northumbria):  
"Survival rates in the road haulage industry –  
What's new?"  
Richard Buckley: "Paying for a tramway: in the black, in  
the red or green with envy"  
Dorian Gerhold: "Tolls, Turnpikes and Traffic"  
Kevin Hey (University of Salford): "The Lesson that  
History Forget – one man- operated buses: a neces-  
sary evil?"  
Professor John Hibbs: "Bearing the heat and burden of  
the day - 'Pirate' bus firms then and now"  
Roger Atkinson: A supplement to "Bearing the  
heat and burden of the day"

**"A Medley of Thoughts"** comprises:

- Nigel Watson: "The Perils and Pleasures of Writing  
Business Histories with particular Reference to Road  
Transport and Shipping"

- Gordon Knowles: "Dennis of Guildford – The Highs  
and Lows of a Century of Vehicle Manufacture"  
Richard Storey: "Producing the 'Companion to  
British Road Haulage History'"  
John Hibbs: "Buses and Coaches – A Neglected  
Industry"

Unfortunately, one paper from each event has had to be left out. In each case, it was a 'Powerpoint' presentation using computerised images, accompanied by captions rather than by full text. The speakers, of course, gave full and admirable commentary; but it was verbal, and not available in written form for publication. The papers omitted are "Area Agreements" by Jim Hulme and "Road Vehicle Testing" by John Parsons.

Regarding the latter, just to give the flavour of what was a highly interesting paper, Ian Yearsley has remarked:

One point that did not come out was that pre-World War II, road testers very often did not drive the vehicles themselves, but followed behind in a car while a works driver drove the test chassis, stopping at intervals to ask "How many gear changes up that last hill, my man?" And bare chassis were tested, not complete vehicles.

I also recall, around 1980, doing a comparative test in Sunderland of several different control attachments to Atlantean gearboxes, which turned them from semi-automatic to full automatic operation. Alan Townsin drove and I took notes, dictating them into a tape recorder. Afterwards Alan went on somewhere else, and I came back to London on the train, transcribing my notes from tape to pen and pad, using headphones. (In those technologically primitive days), a drunk on the train kept asking me who I was listening to on the telephone and why I never said anything in reply ....

Later in this Newsletter there is a review of the two volumes that have so far appeared of Geoffrey Hilditch's autobiography *Steel Wheels and Rubber Tyres*. Kevin Hey, in his paper in the "Learning from History" publication (above), drew, in two instances, on a paper presented to a professional body by Geoffrey Hilditch in 1968, whilst General Manager and Engineer at Halifax.

### ► SUBSCRIPTIONS

This *Newsletter* is being sent to all 2003 members, with apologies for the very intermittent service provided in 2004; it is hoped *Newsletter* will now appear regularly. But, if you have not already done so, please pay your 2004 subscription to our new Hon. Treasurer,

**Mike Caldicott, 7 Priory Dene,  
47 Cavendish Road, Bournemouth  
BH1 1RA.**

Associate: £15  
Corporate member: £30

### ► LEARNING OUR LESSONS

The R&RTHA Committee is meeting in mid-June – and this *Newsletter* may be a day or so too late for you to get in touch with our Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer or *Newsletter* Editor. This is not deliberate avoidance; different considerations have dictated the timing of *Newsletter* and of the Committee Meeting. But the lessons to be learned from the Silbermann episode, and any changes required are going to be the primary topics for that Meeting.

## Where we meet

Right from the very origins of the Association, the R&RTHA has met for its twice-yearly meetings, in Coventry. This has been found to be a suitable, central location. Our annual Symposia and Colloquia – the two descriptions alternate, and the distinction between them has been lost in the mists of time – have in recent years been held elsewhere: Derby several times and Chester once.

As remarked elsewhere in this *Newsletter*, attendances at the twice-yearly meetings are usually good. The meetings are generally interesting, so members turn up. For many years now, they have been held at Coventry Transport Museum, a centrally located establishment. The February 2004 AGM suffered the misfortune of being exceptionally well attended, and yet having to be relegated to a frankly overcrowded room. This was because the Museum has been undergoing a £7,500,000 facelift. A press release by the Museum now says, in effect: "Yippee! It's all over, come and see our dramatic new look". As our meetings are fairly intensive, and their conclusion sees members rushing for their trains, do try to build into your attendance at our September 2004 meeting, at least a few minutes, to look around the museum.

New attractions include a gallery dedicated to cars, cycles and even skateboards from the 1980s and 1990s. Existing galleries take members back to the birth of the motor car, the Blitz and many other themes.

Coventry claims a transport industry-associated history that goes back at least to 1868, when the Coventry

Sewing Machine Company was persuaded to make bicycles. In 1896, the Daimler Motor Company began making cars in an old cotton mill in Coventry and, it is claimed that the City has had 271 cycle makers, 111 motorcycle makers and 136 car and commercial vehicle builders, coachmakers and component manufacturers. R&RTHA members will know only too well that to make claims liked that, someone must have been doing some work in the archives.

Indeed the Museum is proud of its archives, and makes several suggestions that Editors wanting illustrations of, or information on, transport themes are invited to enquire about, including:

- ~ Stars and their Cars – photographs from the Rootes Archive featuring celebrities from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s with Rootes Group cars.
- ~ Pioneers and heroes of early British motoring
- ~ Motoring firsts: three-colour traffic lights, Belisha Beacons, introduction of the Highway Code
- ~ Women and Transport

The Museum's contact for developing Editorial ideas is

Lucy Rumble, Tel: 024 7683 2425  
e-mail: [lucy.rumble@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:lucy.rumble@coventry.gov.uk)

Coventry Transport Museum is, of course, one of the R&RTHA's corporate members.

### WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS – 1

## The Classic Atkinson Club

The club was started so that owners could share information about spares, to put owners in touch with each other, to maintain a register of vehicles, and to save as many Atkinsons as possible.

Two members each doing major restorations were amazed to discover each other less than half a mile away from each other!

We have two Wallis and Steevens steam engines - a 10 ton compound roller and an expansion traction engine. We purchased a Borderer and low loader outfit, which had been laid up by another steam enthusiast for a few years. When my husband Ken (a time served diesel fitter) started to restore the cab, we discovered that the glassfibre was holding the timber up, rather than vice versa. Our hunt for spares took us as far away as Preston, and it took almost three months to find the right windscreen rubber.

Once restored, it was painted in the same colours as the roller, and they stood side by side at shows. We soon realised that the Atki was getting more attention than the roller, and we were repeatedly asked where we bought various parts by fellow owners. Like us they had wasted a lot of time looking in the wrong places. I was just finishing a degree (in Business Studies) and had a basic computer which could easily be used for a basic newsletter, so I started the club as my small contribution to the preservation movement.

We anticipated that membership might be 20, or

perhaps 30 at most, however in the last 10 years, membership has grown to around 300. You do not have to be an owner to join. We have members as far away as Malta and Australia.

If we saw reasonably priced Atki spares on stalls at shows, we would buy them. We are always happy to travel to rescue unwanted obsolete spares available at a fair price, distance no object. As a result, we now have about 10 tons of spares, and can supply Mk.II timber "off the shelf". Some is original, some is made especially for us by a fellow steam enthusiast who owns a Borderer and a joinery business, and a special order form is available to identify the parts required.

With the exception of a few delicate parts, everything is available mail order, and can usually be delivered next day in an emergency. Alternatively they can be collected by prior appointment either from home, Donnington Classic and Vintage Enthusiasts Day, the Atkinson Gathering, the CVRTC show at Gaydon, or the Great Dorset Steam Fair. A technical library has been built up over the years, covering all the major components i.e. Eaton axles, Kirkstall axles, ZF gearboxes, power steering units etc.

We can supply reprinted workshop manuals for the exact specification of any vehicle just as the company did, as all manual sections have been scanned and are stored on CD, and printed as required. A wide range of spare

parts books is held covering almost all vehicles, and we can supply wiring diagrams printed on A3 and laminated so that they can be easily wiped clean.

A register of Atkinsons which still exist is kept - about 1,000 in all. Many are "rough old dogs" which are gradually being cannibalised by members. The "spares for sale" and "spares wanted" pages of the magazine put buyers and sellers together.

A booklet is always available detailing all the Atkinsons known to be for sale (usually around 60). Only a few of these are printed at a time as they are regularly updated.

Technical advice is a phone call away. Ken has now restored a number of Atkinsons for other people and is happy to help anyone with a problem. Younger fitters may not have met some of the components fitted to our older vehicles. The vast majority of these calls relate to brake problems after a long lay up. If they are stuck on, the owner just needs to know the release procedure. Sometimes, an owner may think that his handbrake valve is faulty, but may not realise that it contains some tiny nitrile discs which Atkinsons recommended were changed annually. Once these are replaced (£2.50 each)

it usually works perfectly. Much cheaper than a full overhaul or new valve!

The club meets just once, at the Atkinson Gathering, a very friendly, very informal day. The format for this event is very simple. The lorries arrive, we all look round each others vehicles, have a chat to everyone, buy a few spares, sweatshirts etc. and go home again, wondering where the day went! Some of us arrive on Saturday to prepare the event, joined by some of the long distance travellers, so on the Saturday night we either have a barbecue or visit a local pub for a meal. Members are always invited to bring along any spares to swap. This is not competitive in any way, all Atkinsons are welcome, whatever their age and state. Vehicles in completely unrestored condition always attract lots of attention.

This year's Gathering was held at the Blists Hill Museum at Ironbridge on Sunday May 9th.

Otherwise we keep in touch through the quarterly magazine, generally 24 pages of A4, with many colour photos; or with informal local groups such as NASA (Norfolk and Suffolk Atkinsons).

*Jill Honeybun*

## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS - 2

### Maurice Doggett

Apparently, I became interested in buses at a very early age, in fact before my teeth appeared, as I was often heard to say "bu!, bu!" when a big red bus of Eastern Counties came into view. The 's' was added at a later date! For the first sixteen years of my life, I lived in a bungalow adjoining a motor garage, where my father was the manager, alongside the A11 trunk road at Barton Mills in West Suffolk. This village was on the 213 and 226 Eastern Counties routes but my parents and I made frequent visits to Bury St. Edmunds, Cambridge and Newmarket, with less frequent visits to the other centres of Eastern Counties operations. I began recording the vehicles I saw, initially during the wartime period — there were no books on buses available in those days, so one had to build up one's own fleet lists. I can vividly recall during the late thirties, the coaches of Valiant Direct and Midland Red passing my house on their way to and from the East Anglian coastal resorts and also after the war, new Bristol chassis travelling to Lowestoft to be bodied by BCW and gleaming new buses returning, mainly for Bristol Tramways. At the same time, I began to build up fleet lists of the major operators a.; and when I saw them, particularly those of London Transport as I often travelled from Barton Mills to London on the coaches of Morley's Grey Coaches of West Row who operated day excursions to the capital.

In late 1943, my parents moved to Ipswich where I was introduced to the trolleybuses of Ipswich Corporation as well as a new centre of Eastern Counties' operations. I then spent two years in the R.A.F. out in Aden as my contribution to National Service, returning in late 1952, but during that period, I had kept in touch with the U.K. bus and coach scene by having the weekly issues of 'Commercial Motor' and the infrequent issues of 'Buses Illustrated' sent out to me. On my return, I became aware of the Omnibus Society which I joined in

1953 and then the PSV Circle a few months later and from then on, with their respective publications being available, my interest in the road passenger transport industry took a significant leap forwards. In the interim period, I also had interests in commercial motor transport and aviation which still remain to this day but I have only ever had a passing interest in railways.

The vehicles and operations of Eastern Counties in particular and all the other former Tilling Group operators in general, and the products of Eastern Coach Works and its predecessors and Bristol have always been my primary interests but I endeavour to maintain records of the fleets of all the major bus and coach operators in the U.K. and Ireland which are supported by photographs of my own taking and those acquired from other sources. My photograph collection is probably in the region of 100,000 images — I haven't counted them lately - and I have a very large library of transport and aviation subjects. In addition to the Omnibus Society and PSV Circle, I am a member of several other societies and subscribe to a number of transport magazines.

Unlike the majority of transport enthusiasts, I do not possess any computer equipment, preferring to maintain hand-written or typed records which I have been doing for the past fifty years or so. My hobby has given me immense satisfaction over the years, even more so since I retired from business in 1991. Even so, I do not seem to be able to travel to various parts of the U.K. in pursuance of my interests as much as I would like, although since I retired, I have been to visit more places abroad as I also have an interest in overseas operators and their vehicles. I should also mention that my job took me from Ipswich to Croydon in 1957, I got married in 1966 to a wife who has no interest in my hobby but who is extremely tolerant of it.



## *In a Motor Bus*

Narrow and long the motor-bus  
 Lumbers round bend on bend;  
 My limbs are stiff with standing up  
 Leaning against the end  
 For a long hour; on either side  
 From the roof three lamps depend.

There is no car wherein I ride.  
 These are not men I see;  
 Narrow and long my coffin is,  
 And driven lumberingly,  
 As I go onward through the dark  
 And Death goes on with me.

These are the churchyard images  
 My misty eye beholds;  
 There is no raincoat but a shroud  
 My Chilly body folds;  
 Whose limbs no mortal heaviness  
 But rigor mortis holds.

London and God are left behind,  
 Far, far behind; we go  
 Down through the dark night and the sleet  
 To a cold country woe.  
 And if my soul; shall yet be saved  
 Nor death nor I can know ...

O as my heart beats forward now,  
 And hardly does suspire,  
 Shall I remember, when indeed  
 Death does my soul require,  
 How once from Golders Green we went  
 Down into Hertfordshire?

*Charles Williams*

A poem read by our Chairman, Professor John Hibbs, at the Association's 2004 Annual General Meeting. Thought to date from approximately 1920, although the London General Omnibus Company's Service 84, Golders Green – St Albans had started as a Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holiday service, on Saturday 3 August 1912.



*"The Open Road" Walter Spradbury, 1914*

An illustration of a poster in London's Transport Museum's collection, reproduced by kind permission. This poster is also illustrated in the book *Underground Art* by Oliver Green (Second edition, 2001). This book and the Museum are also the source of the illustration of an old bus driver on a later page of this Newsletter.

*Underground Art* covers the period 1908 – 2000, and is accompanied by notes on the many artists whose work has been used in Underground group and London Transport posters. It costs £17-95, via booksellers. or from London's Transport Museum. It can be ordered from website [www.ltmuseum.co.uk](http://www.ltmuseum.co.uk).

## ► ROUTEMASTERS



No—not the London bus, but the title of a BBC Radio 4 five-part series on the subject of roads (9.30 - 9.45 am on Tuesdays).

Topics have included the evolution of the present road sign system, roundabouts (which apparently originated in Paris to allow monuments set in the centre of them to be viewed by motorists, regardless of which direction they had approached from), the

white line (tried in Manchester in the 1830s, but which became more widespread after a Californian doctor hand-painted one down the centre of her local road in the 30s), and the pedestrian crossing.

Quite fascinating. Hopefully, the series may be repeated.

*David Harman*

## Letter to the Editor

### COAL GAS PROPELLED BUSES (AND OTHER VEHICLES)

Some while ago, there were two articles in Newsletter on gas propulsion in the two World Wars. The first article by T B Maund, in *Newsletter* 24, took in also extensive experiments by Wallasey Corporation in the 1930s. There was another, shorter article by Ron Phillips in *Newsletter* 29, dealing primarily with gas traction in the First World War. But its concluding paragraph contained the remark: "... but what we do not know is why gas in bags was not used during the Second World War"

Contrary to this final paragraph, town gas in bags was available during the Second World War. A booklet published by the British Commercial Gas Association of 1 Grosvenor Place, London SW1, in November 1940 lists gas filling stations for low-pressure gas in bags. The list is arranged by counties and gives the address under each town where gas may be purchased. The reasons for the greater use of Producer Gas in this period, rather than town gas, are complex. I will gladly contribute some further thoughts on this subject, if you would like me to do so.

A G Newman

## Sources of Information

THE  
Eastern National Omnibus Co., Ltd.

Depot Luton.

**HOLIDAY PASS**

Name Mr. Dimmock (2)

From Leighton Buzzard.

To All Services  
and Return.

Date 22nd April - 4th  
May, 1945.

Issued by [Signature]

No. 46217  
For conditions of issue see over.

The Omnibus Society's *Provincial Historical Research Group's PHRG Newsletter No.108* (Dec / Jan 2003/4) drew attention to a new website that is in the process of putting facsimiles of 18th to early 20th century local directories on line. It is part of the University of Leicester's Historical Directories Project. It was forecast that by March 2004, some 500 directories would be available.

[www.historicaldirectories.org](http://www.historicaldirectories.org)

It is commented that England is fairly well covered, but there are, so far, only six directories for Wales, and that the 1920 cut-off date is a hindrance.

The project has been partly funded by the National Lottery's New Opportunities Fund, which has its own website listing other projects that the Fund is supporting – mainly photographic archives. The NOF website is:

[www.nof-digitise.org](http://www.nof-digitise.org)

When Steve Skeavington, 2003/4 President of the Transport Ticket Society, (another of the R&RTHA's corporate bodies), learned of the Historical Directories website he used it to good advantage in his ongoing research into ticket printers. His Presidential Address was on the printers of railway, bus and tram tickets, ancient and modern in Scotland and Wales. The much mightier task of England is what he is currently working on.

Perhaps there is an R&RTHA member who could help with identifying one particularly elusive printer's imprint from the 1930s/1940s. It is H.C.&Co. and is known on various passes and similar forms of the Eastern National Omnibus Co. Ltd. A Holiday Pass for Conductor Dimmock of the company's Luton depot, dating from May 1945, is illustrated here – back and front.

The headquarters of Eastern National were in Chelmsford, in the company's Eastern Section. But in 1945, the company still had its Midland Section; it lost this to the United Counties Omnibus Co Ltd in May 1952, as a fruit of nationalisation. Steve has checked Chelmsford and Essex directories of the period, but has come up with no convincing solution to H.C. & Co. Luton, Dunstable or Bedford might be possible locations for this printer, if the Midland Section was sufficiently autonomous to have ordered its own print of certain forms and tickets, such as this staff pass. Can readers help, please?

### The Eastern National Omnibus Co., Ltd.

THIS PASS is issued and accepted on the express understanding that the Company or Companies on whose Omnibuses it is available are not to be held liable for any loss, damage, or injury sustained by the holder or holders while using this pass.

This pass may only be used when accommodation is available after fare paying passengers have been given precedence.

This pass is available for the day of issue only and is to be handed to the Conductor on the Return Journey.

Not transferable.

By Order,

B. T. PRATT,

Secretary.

Form 79. H.C.&Co. 3022. 15m. 10/43.

## Book Review

### Steel Wheels and Rubber Tyres

by Geoffrey Hilditch, Oakwood Press, Usk

Volume 1, (2003), ISBN 0-85361-614-0. £12.95.

Volume 2, (2004), ISBN 0-85361-616-7. £12.95.

Few of those involved at the sharp end of road transport, whether freight or passenger, have put pen to paper to tell of their experiences and this is a great pity. Having said that, we must not overlook our own Chairman, John Hibbs' notable contribution, "A Country Busman" (DTS Publishing, 2003), which was reviewed in *Newsletter* 33. This told of the heartbreak (and occasional joy) incurred in 'keeping the wheels turning' at a rural bus company in the 1950's. Now, "Steel Wheels and Rubber Tyres" provides a complementary, if very different perspective.

The story begins in Oldham and Geoffrey Hilditch's youthful ambition to become a municipal bus general manager. However, 1943 was not the ideal time for a school-leaver to be entering the bus industry. Employment in a parallel field was the best that could be found – as a clerk and later, premium apprentice at the LNER (former Great Central) works at Gorton. Eventual railway nationalisation and the prospect of rationalisation prompted a move, first to Seddon Diesel Vehicles in Oldham, and then to the first rung on the municipal ladder as a draughtsman at Leeds City Transport, working on the final trams. From there, a short spell at Daimler, Coventry, before joining Manchester Corporation as technical assistant. Then to Halifax Corporation Transport as Assistant Engineer, Plymouth as Deputy General Manager, followed by "top job" – General Manager at Great Yarmouth. The "death of ambition", as tiny Great Yarmouth may be known in GM circles, but it had its highlights – a reserve fleet of wooden-seated utility Guys still running in 1963; the Beach Coach Station and the town tour. And what do you as GM do, when an unexpected crowd gathers at the tour stop, but your Daimler Freeline has no driver? Well, you don your PSV badges, collect the fares and get behind the wheel! Finally, back to Halifax as GM, and the eventful years that saw the absorption of Hebble Motor Services, and of the Todmorden Joint Omnibus Committee, and the formation of the West Yorkshire PTE. As with other well-known GMs, such as Pilcher, Fitzpayne and Fearnley, who became synonymous with the towns or cities in which they carved their reputations, so it is with Hilditch. Say Halifax and you immediately think of G.G. Hilditch.

#### Some highlights ...

The account of steam locomotive maintenance in the Victorian surroundings of Gorton can only be described as enthralling. Mind you, that was probably not the term the author would have used at the time, for it was clearly back-breaking work ... 'bouncing' locomotive connecting rods from workbench to workbench ... cleaning the water tanks (from the inside) on a Class S1 0-8-4 in the pitch dark, save for a candle ... removing the driving wheel splashers (secured by massive, corroded nuts) on Atlantic Viscount Cross. No wonder that, after

a dreadful week spent dismantling the smokebox on B7 no.1361, the author kept a picture of this loco at hand through subsequent years, to serve as a reminder to count his blessings.

Road vehicle engineering topics are no less entertainingly dealt with. Crossley steering, Daimler preselector gearboxes, Park Royal bodies, Weymann bodies (late delivery of) and running buses on "Coalene" / diesel mixture all gave Engineer Hilditch food for thought and plenty to write incisively about. I now understand how a fluid flywheel works, and how wonderful the hydraulic assisted-everything on a Daimler CD650 would have been – if only it had been reliable. It must be confessed that despite the explanation given, the precise workings of an epicyclic gearbox are still a mystery to me, but the author does say that it should all become clear if you actually saw one in the flesh.

There is rich insight into other matters. For example: having reached the olympian heights of having your name (suffixed "General Manager") in gold leaf on the side of the municipal bus fleet, you found you were *not* master of the ship; there was the Transport Committee (and Town Council) to contend with. In the case of Halifax, there was also British Railways who had a share in the Joint Committee and quite different ideas as to what the GM should be doing.

The Municipal Passenger Transport Association and other industry bodies (a hitherto, largely-neglected topic, albeit recently discussed by Ian Yearsley in *Tramway Review*) get a valuable chapter, with accounts of the serious and not-so-serious activities that took place when municipal GMs gathered to compare notes.

The minutiae of vehicle numbers, specifications, etc? ... well, for these you must really look elsewhere, but one appendix does list the final Halifax/Calderdale fleet. Another records the sorry maintenance saga of Halifax's Albion Nimbus buses, and their prodigious appetite for engine gaskets, not to mention engines. A further appendix compares the products on offer from the British bus industry in 1964. The relative performance of models from Leyland, AEC, Guy, Daimler and Dennis under the harsh Halifax operating conditions, make interesting, if melancholy reading, for where are all these names today?

There is humour too: horseplay at Gorton Works ... and at MPTA "do's" ... starting a Seddon wagon engine when the air filter has been inadvertently filled with petrol instead of oil ... depressing the clutch pedal on a trolleybus at the wrong moment (Crossley trolleybuses didn't tend to have clutch pedals but they *did* have power pedals in the same position). One gem is irresistible. The author was not averse to riding on his own buses, from whence came an overheard conversation between two elderly Halifax folk discussing a mutual friend's sudden demise:

"What were up wi' him?"

"I don't rightly knowt name, but it weren't owt serious".

So what, in sum, do we have here? Well, Volume One is mostly "rail" (railway and tramway), Volume Two, all "road". There are accounts from each side of the manufacturer/operator divide and from both 'hands-on' engineering and managerial viewpoints, all written in an engaging style that one or two may find strangely familiar. Could "Gortonian", who, some years ago,

entertained *Buses* readers by "Looking at Buses", and the author be one and the same?

Finally, the question is posed in the closing pages – would a third volume be welcome? I can only reply:

Mr. Hilditch, sir – yes please !!

David Harman

## Book Notice

(*Newsletter* adopts the convention of "reviewing" books that publishers have supplied to the Association for review, and of "noticing" books that members have purchased, and felt to deserve notice).

### Drive on! A Social History of the Motor Car

By LJK Setright, Granta Books, London (2003)

7" x 9 3/4" hardback; 405 pages; index;

54 illustrations; ISBN 1 86207 628 6; £25.00

"Drive On!" divides into five Parts:

- ~ a historical review covering history up to 1885, then by decades to 1985, and beyond;
- ~ an account of the various influences, such as taxation, politics, cost and price, customer expectations and social perceptions that influenced the design and development of the motor car;
- ~ reflections on some sociological effects of the car on urban areas and the open road;
- ~ technical evolution and development covering subjects such as configuration, bodywork, wheels, tyres, gears, electronics, heating and ventilation; and
- ~ chapters on starting, gear changing, what to wear, sport, arts and fashion over the years.

To give a flavour of the content and style of the book here are two quotes from the Preamble.

"The study of what the car has done to society has attracted some interest among a few serious writers, and among an unholy rabble of activists; but they have invariably taken a view that has been either geographically too narrow or historically too short. The study of what society has done to the car has been virtually overlooked, but is just as important an aspect of the story. The unfolding and interaction of political, scientific, technological, migrational, agricultural and domestic histories will be shown to have affected the course taken by the car in its development, to have distracted and delayed and debased it. It will be seen that it is no fault of the car that it has failed to keep its initial promise, nor that it has been accused of evils beyond all reasonable guilt."

"I would like this to be a book that the enthusiast for motoring can read with pleasure, the critic with growing understanding, the historian with some surprise, and the scholar with satisfaction. It should also occasion, amongst such diverse readers as industrialists, accountants, politicians, advertising agents, media people, civil servants, and sporting promoters, not a little embarrassment, wonder, or shame.

See how it strikes you."

It strikes me as a book very well written, in a strongly personal style that I like a lot, a writer's book in which

one frequently suspects that the search for a neat piece of alliteration or a witty phrase, and the accomplishment of a well rounded complex sentence is equally as important to the author as the mere fact (or what he would like us to think of as fact) that he is setting out to convey. Much of his writing is for careful savouring rather than for bolting down. Indeed it may well sometimes go over the heads of those who have emerged from "the valley of the shadow of education" with a vocabulary of no more than 800 words. It is ironic that if they could understand the language, LJK's iconoclasm, his irreverence for authority, his constant snook cocking at the politically correct (and indeed his implied disdain for the whole of mankind) might well appeal quite strongly to those with a speaking range of only 80 words mostly beginning with a "b" or an "f"!

Fiction some of it may be. How can he be sure, for example, that in America of all places "Every common factory hand in General Motors is fully aware of the patrician origins of his employer, can specify the officer-and-gentleman origins of Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac and recognise the even more knightly name of Robert Chevalier, Seigneur de la Salle."? Passages like this make me wonder how much I can confidently believe of all that is in the book. Is LJK trying to kindle deep insights or merely to kid us along? His humour often echoes the gently but penetrating irony of Jane Austen. "For what do we live, but to make sport for our neighbours, and laugh at them in our turn?"

But he clearly knows so much more than I do about motor cars and those who demand, define, design, develop, deliver, distribute, drive, deploy, destroy, dispose of, decry, defame, defend, deify or demonise them (and a few more "d" words besides) that I must accept much of what he says.

My confidence in the book is enhanced by the quality of production: it looks good and I have spotted the merest handful of misprints.

Admittedly, page 22 has a reference to the Southern Railway Company in 1896! On page 245 is a picture of Ford workers at Highland Park, Detroit boarding a series of waiting tramcars captioned "Hordes of them queue for trolleybuses." "Trolleys" maybe, since this is America, but not "trolleybuses" – please.

I found his frequent footnotes somewhat distracting. I object to the inference that I drop my aitches that is conveyed by LJK's use of "an" before "historical". Also, on a personal note, I am dismayed that in the whole book, there is no mention of that excellent, versatile, innovative and developmentally important car, the Austin Maxi.

In conclusion, reading "Drive On!" has been a great pleasure. At £25, it might not be for everyone to buy, but I do strongly recommend laying hands on a copy to "see how it strikes you."

Paul Jefford

## Book Review

### Suburbanizing the Masses

*Edited by Colin Divall and Winstan Bond*

Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Aldershot

ISBN 0-7546-0775-5 £57-00

Donkeys' years ago, when my subjects were English History, American History, French and Spanish, I had a wise schoolmaster who said, "You should read James Fraser's 'The Golden Bough'", and he introduced me to that seminal work on anthropology, to broaden my perspective. "Suburbanization of the Masses" leaves me heartened that there are still wise authors; one must hope that there are still students who can be persuaded to read books of this calibre, among a generation brought up to derive their essays from conveniently pre-digested fodder that they can access on the internet. This is a magnificent book and a source for the development of many channels of further research, as well as being a lesson in the sources to which the various writers have turned.

The book consists of a significant Introduction, followed by thirteen essays on subjects that range far wider than the title might imply. What is more - and with the exception of one or two grimly academic forays - you do not need to be either a student or a scholar to read it. Anyone interested in modern history, or in the way that society has developed in the last 150 years, any feminist with insight deeper than the superficial, an economist wishing to study the debunking of a widely-paraded economic theory or, in fact, anyone who has joined the Roads & Road Transport History Association because it helps in broadening their perspectives, should find fascinating chapters in this book.

However, there are one or two unfavourable features; let us get those over first. The Introduction by Colin Divall and Barbara Schmucki hits at "the popular accounts of lay historians and enthusiasts who otherwise dominated the literature. They usually studied particular modes of urban transport - notably tramways - and individual cities, and although many of their books were of purely antiquarian scope, focusing on the minutiae ..... a growing minority considered factors of interest to the academic, such as local politics, finance and usage".

The many enthusiasts who "Suburbanization of the Masses" must hope to attract as readers will have to forgive that condescending passage, and pass on the those parts of the Introduction which draw attention to the choices influenced through social and cultural values, the power of the consumer, the period when roads were built whatever the aesthetic or social costs, the impact of public transport on social segregation etc.

It is a little unfortunate that the very first essay in the book: "Chapter 1 Between Politics and Technology: Transport as a Factor of Mass Suburbanization in Europe, 1890-1939", by Paolo Capuzzo, whilst being entirely appropriate to the book's title, begins with several dreary pages of statistics-based meanderings. Or there shine through occasional grains of the obvious: "In other terms - in a stronger fashion before the First World War, but to some extent later too - there were social obstacles to sub-

urbanization, completely independent of technical reasons, obstacles related to the economical, social and cultural configuration of the old central worker district".

Then suddenly, if you have persisted and not thrown the book out of the train window - (students may care to earn a PhD researching when Health & Safety prevented you doing any such thing) - about two-thirds of the way through, the chapter becomes absorbingly interesting. Capuzzo turns to the redistribution of political power, in various European countries in the 1920s and the clash between the advocates of building blocks of flats, at a high urban density, and the devotees of the garden city, to take the two extremes. Individual essays cover a huge variety of topics - so that "Suburbanization of the Masses" is not an ideal title, though it is hard to suggest a better one. There is only space here to single out half a dozen of them.

Winstan Bond on "The Flawed Economics and Morality of the American Uniform Five-Cent Flat Fare" is a superb study.

"Cities as Traffic Machines: Urban Transport Planning in East and West Germany" by Barbara Schmucki starts by looking at the concept that the flow of traffic through a city is its lifeblood. The corollary to that concept was that sight had been lost of the purpose of streets and squares and open spaces; they had now to be car parks or traffic arteries. She traces the origin of transport planning as a recognised profession, and how it developed after the Second World War in East and West Germany. Although the base, in the 1950s, was far lower in the East than the West, the rate of growth in motor cars was parallel in both countries, with even the perception in each of crises of traffic jams and cities overflowing with automobiles. Traffic engineers gained status and power.

Barbara Schmucki, of all the writers, strikes the reviewer as the one who has sought to bring the story most up to date - recognising the post-1980 concept of the human-friendly, rather than the car-friendly, city.

John H Hepp IV on Redefining the City: People, Transportation and Space in Philadelphia, 1876-1901 ventures into a totally different field. He starts with the received opinion of the last 40 or so years that suburbanization in large American cities was motivated by white middle class fears of the mostly immigrant working class. This had been based on an earlier widely accepted study of Boston. Hepp found little in Philadelphia (earlier than the 1910s) to parallel the Boston study. His chapter brings out other factors that were the adjuncts of suburbanization and of improved public transport for the middle classes. Department store zones in city centres, and recreational facilities that, in the main, were not just grouped in one area, but all becoming accessible by electric streetcar or steam railway from most other parts of a metropolitan area.

Hepp's Appendix "A Note on Methodology" is well worth noting. He analysed diaries and similar records of Philadelphians of the late Victorian period, that he found



in various archives. He studied the purpose of each mentioned journey, and reached conclusions based on this contemporary evidence.

"Civic Pride, Urban Identity and Public Transport in Britain, 1880-1980" by Ralph Harrington is another fascinating chapter. Reflect on his sentence: "Nonetheless, technologically, operationally, aesthetically, and in terms of ideals of social service to the community, public transport embodied and expressed many of the ideas of progressive municipal provision held dear by generations of urban politicians and administrators" (Consider, indeed, the review on page 11 of this *Newsletter* of the book by Geoffrey Hilditch, a man inspired by the concept of running a local municipal bus service. How much - or how little - municipal pride now survives?)

There are at least two chapters in the book where gender comes prominently into the picture.

"Accounting for the Customers? A Tale of Public Transport in 1930s Coventry" by Lesley Whitworth. It shines through that this lady is younger than many of her readers may be. There are several things that she notices that an older generation found normal or unremarkable. Two that stand out are firstly that the provision of timetables to the public by Coventry City Transport was deplorable. Secondly that the whole orientation of the services was towards the male worker, with no consideration applied to the housewife as a passenger.

Margaret Walsh's chapter on "Passenger Connections: Views of the Intercity Bus Terminal in the USA" is an absolute joy to read. Gender comes into it; but so do many other social and economic facets. The bus terminal was a social melting pot.

Overall, therefore, this is a splendid book. If you are writing anything connected with road passenger transport history, you will find ideas in it. Immediately, you may also realise that this is all already history. So much has happened in the last twenty to thirty years that one needs a second volume straight away. Park and ride; the failure of public transport to react to Sunday shopping; the regulatory measures to oblige public transport to cater for the disabled, without the corollary of obliging the disabled to use public transport; the almost total absence - in most places, but not all - of social acceptability if you are even seen standing at a bus stop; Ken Livingstone; concessionary fares. History is being continuously made. But if you are looking for lessons from history, this book is full of them.

RA

*The following is a copy of a review that has also been submitted by its author to the Railway & Canal Historical Society Journal*

**Norfolk Carrier: memories of a family haulage business, Barker & Sons, Wells-next-the-Sea** -- recorded by Brian Barker, editing and additional text by David Lowe  
90pp, A5, 33 photographs, paperback £7-50 (p&p £1-50)  
Brian Barker, 52 High Street, Wells-next-the-Sea  
NR23 1EN. ISBN 0 9542534 1 8

This is a notable addition to the very sparse literature on small road haulage companies.

Established in 1928, Barkers was for forty years a local

carrier in north and north-west Norfolk, following the tradition of the country carriers of the horse-drawn era, but using motor vehicles to cover a wider area. The first half of the book that deals with this period is particularly interesting, as it describes in some detail a pattern of local trade and transport that is long gone and almost forgotten. Barkers operated regular rounds, collecting an amazing range of goods from forty or more manufacturers, repairers, wholesalers, local depots of national firms and large retailers, chiefly in Norwich, for delivery to garages, small businesses, shops and farms, in the towns, villages and coastal resorts of the district. However, the changes that took place in the 1960s - the acquisition by most firms of their own delivery vehicles, the growth of car ownership and the decline of rural businesses - brought an end to the traditional local carrier.

Thus it was that in the late '60s and early '70s Barkers was transformed into a bulk haulage and storage business, particularly for agricultural produce and related products like fertilisers. It also became the sole shipping agent for the port of Wells, where such traffics were both imported and exported. The second half of the book portrays an enterprise that prospered for another quarter century, despite intense competition released by deregulation of the industry, by being able to respond quickly and imaginatively to changing opportunities and threats. In the end, however, it suffered from the problem that now increasingly faces small hauliers - that of becoming dependent upon two or three large customers. A change of direction by Barkers' key customers led to closure of the business in 2000.

Grahame Boyes

*Your Attention is also drawn to ....*

#### "Tramway Review" - No.197 - Spring 2004

Very briefly mentioned in the Book Review on p.11 of this *Newsletter* is an interesting article by Ian Yearsley (the Tramway Museum Society's representative on the R&RTHA, and also our Research Co-ordinator - see front cover). The article is entitled "Rise and Decline: The part played by Trade Associations". It is a useful one, dealing with a subject that is rarely covered. The evolution of the Associations and their changes of name, that made it even more difficult to comprehend which was which, are covered. Ian goes back to the Tramways Institute, formed by 1891, the Tramways & Light Railways Association, formed 1897. The Institute was wound up, but it was not long before the formation of the Municipal Tramways Association.

The annual alternation of the Presidency of the MTA between Managers and Tramways Committee Chairmen is mentioned. Changes of name occurred as tramways went into decline and were replaced by buses. The Scottish Road Passenger Transport Association is also mentioned, as well as the Public Service Vehicle Operators Association, representing coach and independent bus operators. Various bodies coalesced in the early 1970s into what is now the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK or CPT.

#### "National Railway Museum Review" (NRM Review), the Journal of the Friends of the Museum.

Issue No.106, Winter 2003/4

Gordon Knowles draws attention to an article on National Carriers Ltd - the Early Years, by Peter Land. This is

another reminder that history is not confined to ancient times. Nationalisation, denationalisation and the residues of nationalisation are all history now. National Carriers Ltd (NCL) was formed early in 1967, in anticipation of Transport Act 1968 to take over the road operations of British Railways. The fleet taken over included hundreds of 'mechanical horses'. For image reasons, if no other, they had to be got rid of.

NCL from 1 January 1969 (vesting day) became a division of the National Freight Corporation, which had taken over the non-bus interests of the Transport Holding Company, now to be wound up under the Act.

Transactions of the Newcomen Society,  
Vo1.74, No.1 (2004)

Gordon Knowles also draws attention to this worthy pub-

lication. It carried a lengthy review by R C D Baldwin of the *Companion to British Road Haulage History*. On balance, a distinctly favourable review, although it does point to gaps in the coverage. For example, no separate entry for electric milk floats, and too little on door-to-door delivery, and not enough to do justice to roll-on roll-off traffic; also a limited amount on road construction and civil engineering. The criticisms, however, are intelligent and not off-putting to potential readers.

A particular welcome is given in the review to the individual biographies in the *Companion*: Also a wide readership, not least among restorers of vintage commercial vehicles, is predicted. (One must hope that this is fulfilled). And it is recommended to public libraries and County Record Offices.

## Two "Firsts" ?

How often do transport historians think, "Now, when did that first happen?" and even find that to date the facility or service quite vaguely is just a wild guess. Two cuttings from forty-odd years ago may just help with (a) coach services to Pakistan and (b) contracted Bingo buses - both facilities that did develop more widely.

From *Modern Transport* 10 August 1957

One of the conditions attached at the request of objectors to a Manchester - Karachi coach service granted last week by the North Western Area Traffic Commissioners was that there should be no picking up or setting down of passengers outside Pakistan. The applicants were Mahmood-ul-Hassam Mir, Mohammed Ali Chowdhri and Mahboob Alam Rasal, trading as Horizon Travel Services, Downing Street,

Manchester. Opposition came from Sheffield United Tours Ltd and James Smith & Co (Wigan) Ltd. This express service is to operate from Ardwick Green four times a year in March, May, July and October at a single fare of £69 and a return fare of £115 to cater for the Pakistani population of greater Manchester.

From *Passenger Transport* March 1962

Finally, a word about what is new but is hardly likely to remain an oddity: the effect of Bingo on buses. Delaine Coaches Ltd, the progressive Lincolnshire stage operator, apply for two services to carry passengers "on a contract basis to organisers of Tombola". Television having killed the rural "picture bus", perhaps we shall see the sudden spread of the "bingo bus"

### ► National Tramway Museum Library

Rosy Thacker has left the National Tramway Museum and some changes in opening times of the Library are likely to follow the appointment of a full-time Curator post now being advertised.

Meanwhile, those wishing to use the Library at Crich are recommended to phone 01773 832565 and ask for Winstan Bond or Glyn Wilton.

### ► Just in time ?

It is cutting it very fine, but if this *Newsletter* does come out on or before 10 June as forecast, and if the Post Office plays its part, there is just time to remind you of the Commercial Vehicle and Road Transport Club's annual Heritage Classic Commercial Motor Show.

It is a two day event on Saturday 12 June 2004,

from 12 noon to 6 pm and on Sunday from 9 am to 5 pm. It is held at the Heritage Motor Centre at Gaydon, Warwickshire.

Admission £8-00 for either day, Children 5-16 £6-00, Seniors £7-00. A well worthwhile event with a magnificent display of vehicles, oodles of stalls and a model display as well.

## Extortionate Prices

Scrupulous readers of this *Newsletter*, who do not skip the duller pages, will have read that the officers of the R&RTHA itself are currently quite exercised about a charge for legal expenses by an eminent London firm. They are not the first and they will not be the last to feel that they have been outrageously done by. Ayr Town Council had a not precisely similar, but a parallel, grouse in 1916, as this extract from *The Electric Railway & Tramway Journal* 15 December 1916 shows:

At Ayr Town Council, Mr. Short protested against the way in which a firm had increased their charges for the printing of tramway tickets. By a contract which did not expire till April 30th 1917, the price was fixed at 2½d per thousand.

In December 1915, the Council agreed to pay an increased price of 1d per thousand, and in March last the price was further advanced to 6d per thousand. Now the firm, without having asked the Council, raised the price to 7d per thousand for plain and 7½d per thousand for coloured tickets. In moving that the price be not paid, Mr. Short said that there was a strong suspicion that a "ring" had been formed, and that if the Council did not agree to pay the prices asked, they could not get supplies elsewhere. Mr. Learmont, Convenor of the Tramways Committee, said that they had approached other firms, but that they would not quote at all. Eventually the matter was remitted to the Committee.

Extract from *The Commercial Motor* 28 May 1908  
(submitted by Derek Giles)

**"OLD BUS DRIVER"** (Catford)  
sends the following letter:

"Having experience of both cab and bus driving, I should say that the taxicab driver is better off than any other driver, not even excepting the chauffeur on a private car. I am therefore not surprised to find that many of the old motorbus drivers have given up their jobs in favour of cab work. The work is lighter, the pay is better, and the occupation more pleasant. A driver finds the monotony of driving a bus over the same route, day after day, very trying. If, however, he becomes a London cab driver, he may get a run down to the further suburbs or to Brighton, and he may occasionally force a little fresh air into his lungs this way.

"I consider that motorbus driving is not very healthy, as there is so little protection afforded the driver. I recently had a long spell of rheumatic fever, which I entirely attribute to exposure while driving a motorbus. My ambition is to drive and own my own motorcab, and, in my opinion, there will be, before long, a number of driver-owners in the London streets. The risks were too great with horses, but you can insure a motorcab."

["Old Bus Driver" should remember that the omnibus driver has regular employment and probably, on the whole, shorter hours than the cab driver. As taxicabs increase, their drivers will have to work harder to earn their fares which, at the present time, are not very difficult to obtain. The prospects of a Brighton trip are alluring to the townsman – in the summer. We are unable to understand why a motorbus driver's job should be more unhealthy than that of a taxicab chauffeur. Surely the cab has the more exposed seat. – ED.]



First World War poster from London's Transport Museum -- for fuller background, see caption to poster "The Open Road" on page 9 of this *Newsletter*.