

# Newsletter

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## HOUNSLOW HIGH STREET – a deserted thoroughfare

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The picture of HIGH STREET, HOUNSLOW is from *The Queen's London* published in 1896 by Cassell & Company, London, Paris & Melbourne, "in the fifty-ninth year of the reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria" (For a previous picture from this book see *Newsletter* 41, p.12)

The caption reads : The glory has departed from the long High Street of Hounslow, but in the old days there was no livelier spot in the neighbourhood of London. For Hounslow was the first stopping place for coaches leaving the metropolis, and it is asserted that at the time of Queen Victoria's accession five hundred stage coaches passed along this now deserted street every day, and fifteen hundred horses were stabled here for changing. Just west of Hounslow town lies the Heath, once famous for its military encampments and notorious for its highwaymen. So late as the beginning of the present century the road near Hounslow Heath was lined with gibbets, from which dangled the remains of knights of the road who had paid the extreme penalty of the law.

This is pertinent to Keith Lloyd's Letter in the "Education" segment in this *Newsletter*, where he refers to a scholarly paper which found that the coming of the railways paradoxically meant that certain towns and villages that had been well served by stage coaches, but were by-passed by the railways, became backwaters isolated from public transport. It is a point that may well deserve further research, unless readers can point out other work that has already been done on this subject.

*Newsletter* has already touched on this point in relation to Burford, in Oxfordshire – in *Newsletters* 39, p.15, 40, p.16 and 41, p.16. The subject was also mentioned in the book *The Coaching Era* (Kingsmead Press, 2003), reviewed in the *R&RTHA Chairman's Bulletin* (January 2004), p.7.

## Education in Transport

### in various aspects — and continuing the themes in *Newsletter 41*

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#### Getting back to basics in transport training A personal view from David Lowe *FCILT*

I was very interested in the collection of views and comments on academic qualifications in transport published in the April 2005 issue (No. 41) of the Association's *Newsletter*. Particularly so since I have my own views as to where we are going wrong with the education and training of future transport professionals, or transportants to use a term originally conceived many years ago by the Chartered Institute of Transport and long since, I think, abandoned. Basically, I think we need to get a much better grip on the practicalities of transport operation.

While I do not disparage the modern concepts of logistics and supply chain management or the very important work done in these fields, I do think that the apparent obsession with the 'hi-falutin' theorising that accompanies discussion on these topics tends to overshadow the essential nub of the matter. And the nub of the matter is quite simply this; if the wheels don't turn the goods don't get delivered, and if the goods don't get delivered customers are not happy, and we all know what comes of having unhappy customers. Thus, in my view, particularly education and training-wise, we need much greater concentration on getting the wheels end of the business right and less debate on all the airy fairy theories bandied around in academic tutorials and commercial board rooms. We need to get back to basics, especially the basic skills of effectively controlling transport operations, of efficient lorry fleet management, and of the essentials of making wise choices between the various modes of road, rail and water transport or putting together suitable and cost effective combinations of mode.

Despite being essential to our wellbeing as individuals and vital to the health and status of the national economy, the whole subject of transport has been accorded very little attention by past generations. I do accept, however, that things in this regard are looking more promising now and we are beginning to see many more degree courses being offered in transport related topics such as logistics and supply chain as well as a raft of new initiatives in the sphere of transport training.

There are, and have been, of course, many catalysts for these burgeoning and forward-looking developments in transport education and training, not least, to take just one key example, proposals from the European Commission (EC) for tough new standards of training contained in a 2002 draft Directive on compulsory training for LGV and PCV drivers. The Directive has not yet been implemented and may still be some years away, but when it does come — as it most certainly will do so — its effects will be dramatic both in terms of the intensity of the training required of prospective LGV/PCV licence holders and the scope of the subject material to be studied.

But even without waiting for this particular event to occur, the transport industry has a major training need on its hands even as this article is being written, namely implementation of the European Commission's Road Transport Directive which took effect from 4 April 2005. Anybody who believes that road haulage operators will

escape without having to actually train their drivers to meet the new 48-hour working week and its associated rules as opposed to letting drivers sort out the requirements out for themselves is, I believe, in for something of a surprise.

The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT) has been very proactive with its educational and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes designed to take young people and industry newcomers through to the higher levels of both Institute membership and the ranks of logistics and transport management. Industry too is playing its part by seeking to recruit ever more highly and appropriately qualified management and operations staff. Leading the way with practical transport and logistics training is the newly founded Skills for Logistics organisation, formerly the Road Haulage and Distribution Training Council (RHDTTC).

However, getting back to the previous articles, I am in great sympathy with John Edser's comment about the lack of any mention in the school curriculum of transport, logistics or supply chain issues. My own grandson of 14 years of age confirms that he has never heard any mention of these issues either during school lessons or in career discussions — nor has anybody suggested that he might want to venture into transport or logistics, or even become a train driver! A sad state of affairs indeed. John's researches also appear to confirm my own view that the term 'transport' when applied to anything educational or academic tends to imply 'transport planning'. Important though this may be, what it is not is 'transport operations', where students learn the importance of managing goods vehicle fleets effectively, thus requiring all the relevant knowledge of transport legislation, of the technicalities of heavy vehicles, of the costs and economics of running a fleet of delivery vehicles and so on. And his final point about the lack of a 'glass ceiling' is both true and a definite shortcoming. It is very depressing, John!

I cannot add anything to Colin Divall's piece apart from being encouraged to track down and view the websites he pinpoints — and to look again at my somewhat dusty copy of Dyos/Aldcroft *British Transport*. With regard to Corinne Mulley's piece, this is interesting because I was unaware of the CILT Audit for Change conference and the fact that it appears to have assembled a great deal of information on undergraduate and post-graduate transport-related degree courses.

However, I do concur with Margaret Walsh's suggestion that more research is needed on what transport study courses are available, and especially to find out where they are encompassed within other disciplines (e.g. civil engineering, economics, or geography even), but I fear any researcher will find little on offer in regard to transport operations (i.e. fleet management, vehicle economics and such like) and more or less nothing on transport history — by which I mean, starting from the era when man carried his own food and logs for his fire, then got an ox or a mule to carry them for him before moving on to a big Scania articulated delivery truck, a Class 66 heavy rail locomotive, a Boeing 747 jet freighter

or a containership capable of carrying literally thousands of freight containers. There's a lot there to study. It is said that many school-age children don't know where milk comes from. But do they know what came before the white delivery van or the heavy lorry? Come to that, do they know what came before motorways, bypasses and dual carriageway roads? As the Editor said in the previous *Newsletter*, they should read Sue Copp's fascinating account of the old Turnpikes and about bridges collapsing and being washed away with dire consequences for those unfortunates who happened to be crossing at the time. Surely, this is transport history at its most fascinating. Personally, too, I am always delighted to spend a while engrossed in Theo Barker's and Dorian Gerhold's wonderful work, *The Rise and Rise of Road Transport, 1700-1990* and if your interest is sparked off more by old lorries and the early days of motor haulage rather than mule trains and horse-drawn wagons, then look at Charles Dunbar's, *The Rise of Road Transport, 1919-1939*.

But I digress. Unfortunately, like John Armstrong, I do not have the time to carry out a full-scale survey of available transport study resources. However, R&RTHA members and other readers may be interested to know something of my own recent and future efforts. First, I have recently completed the manuscript for a book on intermodal freight transport, looking particularly at the combinations of road, rail, inland waterway and short sea shipping transport modes [*Intermodal Freight Transport*, due to be published by Elsevier in September/October 2005]. Not an historical work, I agree, but certainly, I hope opening up the debate about the merits of and potential for the use of these alternative modes in combination. And second, again moving away from my usual territory of road haulage legislative topics, I am working on a book about the wider aspects of freight transport. This will start at the very beginning and work its way through to cover modern logistics concepts. Not pure transport history and not pure logistics but, I hope, a nice blend of material that will give its readers a broad view of what freight transport is all about.

Potential readers of these two books may, of course, be those who are studying the various Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport courses on offer which include a comprehensive and progressive programme of logistics and transport qualifications designed to formalise and improve sector specific knowledge and skills, plus specialist options for anyone working in supply chain, passenger transport and transport planning.

These qualifications start with an *Introductory Certificate in Logistics and Transport (Level 2)* for New Entrants to the profession to provide them with a broad understanding of the principles, applications and concepts of moving goods and/or people.

The next grade is the Level 3 *Certificate in Logistics and Transport* for team leaders, new supervisors and aspiring managers which provides a modular programme designed to increase core skills and knowledge and build the confidence to improve personally and professionally.

Graduate entrants for the CILT exams and existing managers may aim for the Level 4 *Professional Diploma* which is designed to enhance expertise in either the supply chain, passenger transport or transport planning environments and build core management skills [but no

mention of freight transport operations – DL].

After this comes the Advanced Diploma for senior manager grade entrants. This is a high level course designed to provide strategic management skills and a tactical insight for professional and business development. The final step is for senior managers and company directors to opt for an MSc course in Logistics or Passenger Transport Management. These are unique and specific distance-learning courses designed to enhance strategic thinking, motivation of oneself and colleagues, and the setting and achievement of business objectives. Besides these five steps to senior grades the CILT offers specific training with specialist seminars and workshops; for example, sessions leading to the examinations for Professional Competence (CPC). It also offers advice and guidance on further career progress via its Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Mentoring schemes.

On a more practical level, the work of the Skills for Logistics organisation is concerned with identifying the skills and training needs of firms involved in logistics covering all modes of transport and related functions such as warehousing, administration and vehicle workshops. The training, provided by affiliated training centres, aims to improve the skills of operatives within the industry and to provide qualifications for trainees in the form of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) or Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs).

Three new NVQs have been developed which are of specific relevance to transport and logistics; namely, *Carry and Deliver Goods* – aimed mainly at drivers; *Traffic Office* for people involved with planning and organising the movement of goods; and *Storage and Warehousing* for those dealing with the handling and storing of goods. These new NVQs complement existing NVQ qualifications and the Traffic Office NVQ also provides National Occupational Standard (NOS) based assessment of Transport Managers against the requirements of the EU Directive for the professional Competence of transport managers.

While it has been very easy to bemoan the lack of facilities in the past, it now seems that opportunities are emerging for young people to advance in transport and logistics through education for those seeking careers on the management side and skills training for those with more practical inclinations. But what we *really* need is for schools to develop a much greater awareness in pupils about the possibilities, and indeed the very exciting and worthwhile opportunities, for careers in transport.

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David Lowe

John Edser writes:

Knowing that my initial paper (in *Newsletter* 41) was seen by some contributors, before they wrote their pieces, I have the following comments to make:

- 1 I was certainly not being "pessimistic" in my original paper – pragmatic perhaps, but based on current conversations with operators, and articles in both modal magazines and in the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport [CILT (UK)] *Focus*.

My contribution was, as John Armstrong says, about the state of Transport Studies in general, with a particular concern for the range of disciplines involved in Logistics and in Transport Management, not necessarily in Transport Engineering or History.

My principal worry is the lack of both knowledge and understanding of the industry as a whole as a career, and the enormous skills shortage it faces as a result.

Since my original article, *The Guardian* published its "University Guide" on 19 April 2005. It listed 47 different subject areas, ranking approximately 20 universities under each heading. Needless to say, no Logistics or Transport at all – yet full coverage of Tourism. No wonder the industry has no "presence" at all for potential undergraduates.

Taking into account that the industry is now subject to the European Working Time Directive, with no opt-out allowed from the 48-hour week – even when averaged over six months. In addition, drivers are required to take a 45 hour break at least once a fortnight. I have spoken to managers and drivers in the road freight industry who say that employees are already losing up to 15% of their income through loss of overtime and weekend working. Previously reasonable daily "out and home" journeys are no longer practicable within the drivers' hours permitted under the Directive.

On the passenger side, the Directive defines bus drivers on routes over 50 km (31 miles) as long distance lorry drivers, and subject to the same restrictions. Employers must either fit tachographs or use formal rosters to track their hours. This has already raised problems, particularly on longer coastal routes (Fistbus X53 Poole – Weymouth – Bridport – Exeter) and in rural areas. Approximately 50% of Western Greyhound's routes in Cornwall exceed 31 miles; many East Anglian inter-urban routes are also affected.

All this points to the need for experienced and knowledgeable staff at all levels, both now and in the future, and reinforces the points made in *Newsletter 41* by Rebecca Jenkins.

I am not decrying Colin Divall's work at York and the various opportunities there are to study Transport History. The amount of transport literature and records that are available is enormous – again at every level. However, as I have said, my concern is to provide a supply of well-trained and knowledgeable people for the future efficiency of the industry, and in particular to manage the ever-increasing and complex global supply chains that keep us alive today. For example, it has been stated that it is cheaper to move a container by sea from China to Hamburg than it is overland from München. I am afraid that I cannot see how any increase in Transport History students will help meet these demands.

I was very well aware of the Cardiff Conference that Corinne referred to and I have known David Stewart-David for over 20 years. In fact, but for family illness, I would have been there. However, it was as a result of their concerns at the Conference discussions that the signatories to the West Midlands CILT letter (that I referred to in last *Newsletter*) included two of the delegates. I may well be wrong, but I cannot recall the

University Transport Study Group producing anything to attract students into the industry from the secondary education sector, which is where the stimulus is needed.

To give direct answers to some of Margaret Walsh's questions:

- A Loughborough has no transport-related post-graduate courses at all.
- B There are no entries for transport courses in the geography section
- C As I stated, there are 14 general (non-engineering) transport courses in the Civil Engineering sections; whether they should be there is debatable.

However, the pure engineering side of the industry is well-served, backed up by their professional Institutes in the Mechanical, Electrical and Civil Engineering courses. Their students will be able to maintain a wide variety of vehicles, trains, ships, aircraft, roads, railways, bridges and port facilities. However, they will need efficient professionally-run transport companies, as well as knowledgeable national, regional and local transport planners to say "how many of what type" of lorries, buses, trains, planes and ships they need to build, and what types of infrastructures are needed to sustain them.

- 6 The Government's rejection of Tomlinson's "all embracing" 14-19 Diploma has not helped the industry, as any transport-related module that might be included will now inevitably be put in the "vocational" category, already being 'spun' as the "second-class route".
- 7 Rebecca Jenkins' final comment says an awful lot about the thought processes behind current commercial industrial developments. Basically, the commercial planners and developers assume that every employee can both drive and owns a car. Then they wonder why the locality clogs up twice a day. I well remember a case where a route between a sand quarry and its processing plant went unavoidably through the middle of a large, old country town. Permission was granted to greatly increase the extraction, subject to the condition that not one more lorry must pass through the town. British Rail quickly refurbished the stub branch to the quarry and ran a very successful shuttle contract until the quarry was exhausted. Everyone was a winner.

Apply this thinking to new industrial developments – i.e. develop with minimal parking allowed – the area becomes far more attractive to public transport operators and there is less congestion. Wishful thinking!!

To some degree, Corinne's own departmental title: "School of Engineering and Geosciences" encapsulates my basic argument. If I were a student looking for a course in the Logistics and Transport areas, I would look at the Logistics, Transport, Business Studies, Economics and perhaps the Geography area – not the School of Engineering and Geosciences. All the more reasons for grouping all the courses in one list.

**Other Correspondents write:****The Professional Driver Shortage***(Newsletter No.41, p.7)*

Whilst one cannot but agree with Rebecca Jenkins (whom one remembers from when delivering frozen chickens), the looming staffing crisis has been a long time on the horizon.

It was apparent as regards the passenger side in the early days of the National Bus Company. Measures were discussed then but largely abandoned when high unemployment levels eased the situation in the 1980s, only to re-emerge more recently. The haulage side had undergone a profound sea-change in its scope of operations (growth in continental operation, etc) in the 1970s and drivers were not so hard to find, but the chickens are coming home to roost now.

Any talk of career structure in recruitment is bedevilled by the one underlying failing that has always dogged the haulage industry, viz the long hours culture. Much is made of the fact that the City of London has longer hours than its counterparts in Europe, but what would it make of a regime that requires someone to arrive at their 'desk' at 9.0am, remain there with a single 45-minute break until at least 9.0pm and indeed several times a week extend to midnight, whereupon they would be required to sleep at their 'desk' in order to be present on time for the following day? That is the plain reality of life for the LGV driver of today. 60-hours a week have been regarded as the absolute minimum working week; many employers considered much more was not unreasonable. With the Working Time Directive (now in force) the only consideration given is how to circumvent the regulations by abuse of the 'Periods of Availability' provisions, trying to take annual holidays into account as adding to the amount of legal hours that can be spent at the wheel. In no other industry or workplace (including transport's own warehousing sector) would such conditions even be contemplated. The current preference for imported immigrant labour for driving staff is mainly because such working conditions can be imposed without demur.

It is small wonder that the life of a 'trucker' today is not seen as anything other than short term employment and is so unattractive to the younger element. One is perceived as some special kind of breed who has not any kind of life outside of work. An increasing trend in the food distribution sector has been to recruit only on the basis of permanent weekend work, no Saturdays or Sundays off, ever, other than annual holidays. This flies in the face of reason, for until such times as schools go 24/7, family life continues to revolve around the weekend. The inevitable result is that those taking up the offer regard it as a stop-gap until something better emerges. This leads to lack of any real commitment, whilst the employer is faced with a constant programme of training of new recruits.

It is true to say that there is much scope to improve the image of the industry and promote it as a worthwhile management career. Whether that could be extended to 'shop-floor', driving, positions until the foregoing is addressed is rather more doubtful. It is likewise true that there is no 'glass ceiling' and that promotion to management from the 'shop floor' is commonplace, but without a back-up ongoing training programme throughout, it is all too easy for those without any real managerial skills to be promoted beyond their abilities.

Conversely, one can all too easily be overloaded with 'whiz-kids' lacking in practical 'hands on' experience. One aspect that frequently appals is the lack of basic literacy skills amongst middle (sometimes senior) management. Whilst this may be more a reflection on our education system over recent decades, it suggests a lack of professionalism that cannot be good when dealing with customers in some other sector that maintains better standards, particularly elsewhere in Europe.

Of course, one is very conscious of being about to retire and who may therefore being regarded as 'old fashioned' in outlook. Perhaps this is illustrated by a recent (text) instruction sent to a driver, "get 2 ..... soonest". My version read "Proceed ..... with utmost despatch"!

**Dave Bubier, Caldicot**

**Researching Transport History**

One thing is clear from the various contributions on academic qualifications (*Newsletter 41*): transport studies are spread round assorted departments in different educational establishments. Consequently, when researching transport history, relevant information may appear in a very wide range of periodicals.

I spent the whole of my career (1967-2001), initially as a lecturer and latterly as a senior lecturer, at the University of Southampton. On arrival, I soon discovered that the Department of Extra Mural Studies ran evening classes and one-day meetings, as well as study tours, on a variety of subjects, including transport (with emphasis on its history). The head of department then was the late Harold Trump. Much of the transport, however, was in the hands of Dr Edwin Course, senior lecturer in transport and industrial archaeology, the latter including the transport industry. I attended some of the courses and soon learnt that Edwin's main interest was railways. He had already written a book on London Railways (a spin off from his Ph.D. thesis at the London School of Economics) and he later wrote three volumes on the Railways of Southern England. Later, I was invited to give the occasional lecture on road passenger transport.

In those days, extra mural classes were available to any member of the public who wished to attend and students were not assessed on what they had learnt. At a later date, however, emphasis shifted towards assessed courses with a paper qualification at the end. The Southampton Department was first renamed the Department of Adult Education and more recently the Department of Adult Continuing Education.

Some transport also featured in other departments and, in the early seventies, I was briefly involved in helping Michael Freeman, a student, in the Department of Geography, who was researching the South Hampshire stagecoach network<sup>1</sup>. One of his conclusions was that before the arrival of railways, there was a fairly extensive network of stage coaches in the area, but this greatly contracted when railways arrived. One result was that "several inland towns lost virtually all regular public means of passenger communication with adjacent centres". He also states that local carriers may have partly stepped into the gap, but "the extent of their passenger-carrying activities is by no means clear".

Whilst reminiscing, may I mention that, at one stage, the



local branch of the Chartered Institute of Transport (as it then was before "logistics" was added) held its meetings in the University, and I attended some of them as a guest? So I met some of the management of various local bus operators, including John Owen. He was then with Southampton City Transport, but later moved to Thamesdown Transport, and is this year's President of the Omnibus Society

At one CIT meeting, the speaker was extolling the virtues of the latest equipment for loading large heavy goods on to lorries. At discussion time, a lorry driver in the audience brought the meeting down to earth by pointing out that when he arrived at the place where the goods were to be unloaded, such equipment wouldn't be available.

Finally, perhaps I should reveal what discipline I was in: not transport, but mathematics. One year, however, I was president of the Southampton and District Branch of the Mathematical Association and I managed to concoct a presidential address involving the signs which have to be affixed to lorries carrying dangerous loads.

E Keith Lloyd, Southampton

- [1] M.J. Freeman, The stage-coach system of South Hampshire 1775-1851, *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol 1 (1975) 259-281.

## Editorial

Tight on space, lots of 'meat' and very few pictures this time. However, your Editor does hope that *Newsletter's* readership, both our generalists, and our specialists "in volumes of forgotten lore", will all find something of interest. Education in transport, the Working Time Directive, rural bus subsidies and where perhaps to turn for funding, Gladiator mail vans (and early vehicle registrations), the R&RTHA's history, its new website, the

programme for our 2005 Symposium in Chester, the growth of containerisation, the motor industry in Surrey, motor racing at Brooklands, the importance of the horse at the beginning of the 20th century, various aspects of World War 2, Quaker turnpike trustees, firms with a long history, and towns by-passed by 'progress', early caterpillars in Blackpool and early bicycles in Cambridge all have a mention.

## Did the Long Arm of the Law Overreach Itself?

Some references to assumptions of power on the part of the Public Carriage Office in London during the late 1920s, in areas far beyond the boundary of the Metropolitan Police Area, are to be found in a file at The National Archives. It is generally recognised that under the leadership of A.E. Bassom (who died in 1926), the Public Carriage Office (PCO) had a very well defined set of standards by which it licensed buses, coaches and taxis which operated in London. It may well be assumed that those powers of licensing applied to all vehicles which it was proposed to operate within the Metropolitan Police Area and increasingly, the routes that buses and coaches were to follow. What is surprising is that there is evidence that the Public Carriage Office attempted to exert control on these routes after they crossed the boundary of that Area.

The file PRO MEPO 2/2107 contains correspondence with United Service Transport Co. Ltd (UST) of 143 Clapham Road, London SW9 who were seeking approval for coach routes from London to the coast and to race meetings as far afield as Newbury and Newmarket. The applications were considered and approved by the PCO for the 1927 season and were re-applied for in the Spring of 1928 with some variations. On 7th April 1928 the PCO wrote to inform UST that their applications would be granted subject to certain restrictions as to route. Most of these restrictions were well outside London. A couple of weeks later there was correspondence between UST and the PCO on the subject of a route to race meetings at Plumpton in Sussex and the company was required to submit fare tables. A similar series of applications were made in 1929, for which PCO approval was conveyed to UST by letter

on 5th April, subject to route restrictions in such places as far away as Worthing and Norwich. The directors at UST were evidently becoming increasingly irritated by the attitude of the PCO until someone had the idea of writing to the Kent Constabulary asking if they would have any objection to coaches following the original route through parts of that county. The reply came back offering no objections, so UST sent a copy of that reply to the PCO, requesting that the matter be reconsidered. The file does not retain a copy of the PCO reply, but it is obvious from notes in the file that a 'climb down' letter was sent. On 30th April, Chief Inspector May recorded that he had travelled by omnibus over one of the proposed coach routes into Canterbury and noted that a double deck bus runs every 30 minutes between Dartford and Faversham; he could see no further objections to the UST proposals. A note in the file dated 3rd May recommends that in the case of further surveys of routes outside the Metropolitan Police Area it would be wise to get in touch with the local police at the time so that 'no divergence of opinion shall publicly arise as in this case'. Finally, on 28th May 1929, Superintendent Claro suggested that any application covering roads beyond the Metropolitan Police Area should in future be accepted provided that all the roads are classified as 'A' by the Ministry of Transport.

Nowhere in the file is the legal justification for the PCO's action recorded; it appears that they simply assumed and developed wider and wider powers of control. Can any readers suggest otherwise and quote the appropriate legislation covering such action?

Tony Newman  
21st May 2005

# Memories of West Suffolk 1970-74

## 1 ~ RURAL BUS SUBSIDIES

*In August 1970 I was appointed Technical Officer in the Treasurer's Department of West Suffolk County Council. The job included administration of subsidies for rural bus services under the Transport Act 1968. The following are some of my memories of the period, but as I did not keep a diary or notes, they may not be totally accurate.*

### Introduction

West Suffolk was not a typical county, in that the local National Bus company subsidiary (Eastern Counties) accounted for only about 40% of the stage carriage mileage, the remainder being shared between 26 independent operators.

The general impression held by the public and the media was that many villages had no bus services. I found this was not true, there being no community with a population over 60 which did not have at least a market day shopping service. Angel Hill at Bury St Edmunds was a bus-watcher's paradise on Wednesdays, with services from almost every corner of the county. What many villages lacked was a journey-to-work service to the nearest town. However, people are remarkably adaptable, and a detailed survey done by the Department of the Environment in our area showed that more journeys (7%) were made by lifts (arranged or casual) than by bus (6%). This itself could cause problems: one journey-to-work service previously carrying about 20 passengers a day was withdrawn, the operator told me, because one regular passenger bought a car and gave a lift to three others.

### The operators

I was generally unimpressed by management in the nationalised monolith – too often the response to my query about why something was done was 'because it has always been done'. However, even they could not find an excuse for the most bizarre journey in the timetable: the Sunday service between Lakenheath and Beck Row (the air force base north of Mildenhall). In the morning, a bus ran untimetabled three miles from Mildenhall to Lakenheath, then three miles timetabled from Lakenheath to Beck Row. Then it spent the day on the Beck Row – Mildenhall – Bury St Edmunds service. In the evening it did the reverse journey from Beck Row to Lakenheath (timetabled) then back to Mildenhall (untimetabled). The explanation was that there used to be a Lakenheath outstation, whose bus ran the Sunday service from Beck Row into Bury St Edmunds, and its cross-country journey to pick up the service was registered; after all, if it picked up just one passenger occasionally, that was extra income. When the outstation was closed, and the working was then based on the Mildenhall garage, nobody remembered to unravel the working.

One of the biggest surprises I had was the extent to which the NBC subsidiary was dominated by the drivers' union. For example, I wanted the company to speed up one of its inter-town services, which still seemed to be run to essentially the same timings as before the Second World War, despite the improvement in both vehicles and roads. It was explained to me by their management that to do this they would have to 'buy it out', and this wasn't worth the effort.

I much liked all the independent operators I met, though dealing with them often brought frustrations. For example, I wanted to publish area timetables. I had all the details from the Traffic Commissioners, but wanted the operators' cooperation, thinking they would welcome the publicity. Not so. The excuses – how 'tongue in cheek' I do not know – included: 'Locals know when the bus goes and nobody else would catch it' and 'If the times are published they'll know I'm running late'.

In general, the independents were more than cautious, they seemed very concerned not to upset other operators. Having got the licence for a particular service – and in the early 1970s, many of the individuals I was meeting were those who had won the battle in the traffic courts following the 1930 Transport Act – that route was their property, and everybody's property rights were respected. Competition was unwelcome; entrepreneurship seemed not apply to stage carriage services.

### Requests for subsidies

Most of the requests came from Eastern Counties, few from the independents, and none that I recall from parish councils or the public. From my analysis of the economics of transport – remember that I was a keen newly qualified accountant – I had expected individual journeys to be threatened, for example those on Sundays or in the evenings. To my surprise this did not happen: instead it was whole services. Eastern Counties gave me full access to their waybills, so I was able to analyse the usage of the various elements of the service. Occasionally this revealed opportunities, for example when we were able to fill up a bus with schoolchildren, which enabled the Education Department to reduce its hirings. Sometimes we were able to adjust other services so as to eliminate a driver's shift without greatly reducing the service to the public. Most often it was obvious that some journeys were hopelessly uneconomic and that to subsidise them would be a waste of public money, and so they were withdrawn. Perhaps the nationalised company was happy to be able to blame the local authority for this; in the past the expectation was that loss-making services should be cross-subsidised from those which were profitable.

Initially I had thought that I would be able to apply the classic management principles that I had been taught: decide the objectives, then consider the alternative methods of satisfying them. I soon found that this did not work. There seemed no way of saying, for example, that every community with a population of over a certain number should have a journey-to-work service to the nearest town – how could I determine that number? Instead I worked backwards from the decisions in specific cases, and so over a couple of years built up a set of guidelines based on the precedents. I reported to a small sub-committee of senior councillors, who debated the issues in an informal way and reached what I considered sensible decisions (even when they were not the decisions I would have made myself). We did not have a specific budget, but finance was genuinely weighed against benefit.

The main element of cost was the number of vehicles (and hence drivers) required on-peak for the journey to work or to school. Off-peak journeys cost only the marginal fuel and maintenance. Unfortunately, this was not how the cost was calculated for subsidy purposes. It would have been

unreasonable for Eastern Counties' finance staff to have negotiated with a multitude of local authorities, so Norfolk County Council acted as 'lead' for all subsidy calculations, and the result was a straight rate per mile. Nevertheless, for our discussions at local level about service patterns, I ignored the formula imposed on us and tried to deal with the real situation.

The outcome was that we protected journey-to work services because of their importance to employment and the local economy, providing there were at least fifteen passengers on average (if my memory is correct). Off-peak services during the day were acceptable with only six passengers. Evening services were generally not supported. Sunday services were an emotive issue. The public perception was that these were important for visiting the hospital. I did a survey of all passengers using one inter-town service that went close to the local hospital, and found that only one person was actually using the bus to visit the hospital, and she returned home by some other method. However, in this case emotion triumphed over reason, and the service was subsidised.

We did not tender services where we had decided to give subsidies. In the early 1970s, local authorities were not in a 'tendering culture' as they were from the mid-1980s. Also, the perception still prevailed that the established operator had special rights to the service.

#### The rail replacement service

When a railway line closed, it was common for British Rail to have to subsidise a replacement bus service for five years. This happened in the case of the railway linking Sudbury to Long Melford, Cavendish, Clare, Stoke-by-Clare and Haverhill, the bus service being operated by Theobalds of Long Melford. When the five years was about to expire, the County Council was asked to continue the subsidy, which was then just over £2,000 a year. (As a measure, this was about my salary as a newly qualified accountant. It was the biggest subsidy request we had during my four years in West Suffolk.)

The buses ran to Sudbury railway station to connect with the trains on the branch line railway to Marks Tey, from whence there were connections to London. Some trains ran through to Colchester. From memory, there were six or seven bus journeys each way on weekdays. I carried out a simple questionnaire survey of every passenger travelling during a particular week, and found that a negligible number of passengers (I think it was one) connected on to the train. Almost everybody was travelling locally, usually for work or shopping, occasionally for other purposes such as visiting friends. However, my impression was that the timings were not particularly convenient for many of the desired purposes.

In conjunction with Theobalds, I recast the service so that it could be done with one bus, making the times as convenient for the public as I could. I negotiated with Premier Travel for them to incorporate the journey-to-work service into Haverhill with another of their services which the County Council was already supporting. After discussion with the Transport Officer in the Education Department, it was arranged for children living in Stoke-by-Clare who went to school in Clare to travel one way by this bus and the other way in a hired coach, instead of having the coach for both to and from school. In the first year of this new service, the subsidy needed came down to £500, despite allowing Theobalds a

significant increase in costs; in the second year it was profit-making.

#### Dial-a-bus

Lakenheath is a large scattered village in the north-west of the county, best known for its US Air Force air base; Mildenhall is the nearest small town, which also has the headquarters of the district council. Eastern Counties said they would withdraw their service between the two if they were not given something in excess of £1,000 a year subsidy. All the journeys were off-peak.

The road network made Lakenheath a particularly difficult village to serve – there was no obvious way to route the bus service. I discussed the problem with Alec Barber, the County Council's School Transport Officer, and we came up with what was then an innovative solution: a semi-timetabled bus service. The basic concept was that the buses would leave from certain points in Lakenheath at specified times but the exact route taken would depend on the telephone calls received by the operator; on the return journey from Mildenhall, the bus would take people on it to wherever they lived in Lakenheath. Such an arrangement would need an operator with minibuses, radios in the buses, and a 'base' telephonist. We had a willing partner in Hammond's Taxis, who could fulfil all the requirements, though the firm had no experience of stage carriage operation.

The timetable was drafted to start after Hammond's morning school transport commitments ended and to fit round the school journeys in the afternoon. A couple of the timings gave connections to and from Cambridge by Premier Travel's coach service, but generally they were designed to give between an hour and an hour & a half for shopping, visiting the doctor and other local needs.

We investigated the only dial-a-ride service we knew of, the one that had recently started at Stevenage, though our concept was significantly different, and we sure that what we wanted to do would work. We needed only to persuade the Traffic Commissioner.

Except that when Eastern Counties heard what we intended to do, they decided to continue their service without a subsidy.

Peter Brown  
August 2001

- Peter Brown is Editor of the Journal of our corporate member, the Railway & Canal Historical Society. We are grateful to him for letting us have this article for *Newsletter*. It has previously been published in the ongoing series of Occasional Papers published by the Railway & Canal Historical Society's Road Transport Group. It is hoped to publish Part 2 of *Memories of West Suffolk*, dealing with School Transport, in a later *Newsletter*.

#### RURAL BUS SUBSIDIES and BOWLAND TRANSIT

Peter Brown's account of his experiences thirty-odd years ago, in the very early days of Transport Act 1968 rural bus subsidies, makes fascinating reading. It brings out the generally complacent attitude of a National Bus Company subsidiary, the very strong sense of ownership of rights in a service, that had been generated forty years earlier still, by the initial awards of Road Service Licences by the first



Traffic Commissioners, the blind inefficiency with which rail-replacement bus services had been imposed at the time of the Beeching cuts in the mid-1960s,\* and finally, the impact of new thought.

However, there were dark, ulterior motives as well, when your Editor leapt at the chance to publish Peter Brown's article in *Newsletter*. In issue No.40, we had an article by our member, Sue Buckley, on Bowland Transit, and how there were strong elements of history repeating itself nearly 40 years on in the Forest of Bowland. At least, this was so in terms of the local enthusiasm generated for this good public service.

*Newsletter No.40* celebrated the creation and success of Bowland Transit. This *Newsletter, No.42*, has to record what happens when a part of the funding dries up. Who then picks up the tab? And this is where real problems arise. Bowland Transit was a success; it carried many more passengers; local pride was taken in it; Bus Industry Awards were bestowed upon it (*Newsletter 40*, p.10). But one major sponsor, the Countryside Agency has been succeeded by the North West Development Agency, which favours fostering 'tourism', rather than rural buses. This leaves a significant hole in the budget. Some government money continues until 2008, and Lancashire County Council, a council high on the list of those with a good record for supporting public transport, has assured a continuing level of service provision until 2008, but not matching the level that was provided in 2004. The same operator, Travel for All Ltd, and the team of drivers continue, but two of the four buses have had to be disposed of. From 21 May 2005, the Sunday services are drastically cut, the weekday ones on the main B10, Clitheroe to Slaidburn and Settle, are reduced.

Sue Buckley herself, with Lancashire now having no money to employ anyone to "oversee and promote" Bowland Transit, has been transferred to an "only temporary" appointment to oversee and motivate another new scheme, the Pendle Wayfarer, on the other side of Pendle Hill, serving the Nelson, Barrowford, Barley area. Sue is a 'hands on' supervisor. So one day, this May, she parked her car in Barley and caught the hourly bus that the new scheme provides on a circular service, (uni-directional only; new timetable from 6 June). But she had not reckoned with a change of driver at Nelson, and with the operator therefore putting on a new bus. The bus that Sue was on was delayed a few minutes by sheep (or other rural hazard), and came into Nelson to find that the new driver had come with a different bus, and had duly departed, on time, before Sue's bus came in with its driver wanting to

take it back to depot. Sue was "not a very pleased little lady". She was in Nelson, her car was in Barley and in thirty minutes time she was due to pick up her children from school in Chipping. The practicalities that the ordinary public faces, which Sue feels had been overcome in Bowland Transit, with a motivated, dedicated team of drivers, known to their passengers and who knew their passengers, have all to be re-created again, with a whole new team of drivers. And not only new drivers, but negotiations with a new operator, Tyrer Tours Ltd, the Parish Councils of Barley, Newchurch-in-Pendle and Roughlee, and with three (initially antagonistic) local newspapers – in Burnley, Colne and Nelson. Not to mention – though one only whispers such a thing – occasional "advice" from higher authority.

The Government likes to put its money into new projects that generate publicity and goodwill. It is not so clear that it adequately explains that, in the long run, it not only expects the local community to welcome the improved public transport structure, but that it expects, during the relatively short currency of Government funding, that the 'locals' will, in some manner or other, arrange schemes for significant, locally-raised, ongoing cash. The services will never become truly commercially viable, but are of considerable local worth, and even pride. One conceivable solution – and I write this without detailed knowledge, and am open to correction – is suggested to me by the Carnforth Connect Project, another Lancashire County Council / Government Rural Bus Grant scheme. Comparison of the initial publicity in 2002 with 2005 leaflets for the same Project seem to show significantly more sponsors now than there were originally. For example, the Arnsdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, English Nature, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Leighton Moss and The National Trust all seem to have been roped in. Our member, David Harman, goes further and suggests that – and here again one must choose the words carefully – "bodies with some wealth" are not averse to spending sums, trifling to them, on worthy environmental projects, including local rural bus services. There might even be European Union money to be coaxed out of Brussels. ("Tried that; no luck" interposes Sue). Or can readers suggest any other answers that history may have provided for this particular dilemma?

RA

\* An Omnibus Society paper of 1968, "Bus or Train" by Philip D Long "A Commentary on the 1965 proposal to close the East Suffolk Railway Passenger Services" provides chapter and verse, with considerable detail.

## To Dinner – by bicycle

A recent weekend in Cambridge reintroduced me to *Period Piece*, a marvellous book about her Cambridge childhood by Gwen Raverat, a grand-daughter of Charles Darwin. Gwen Raverat was born in 1885 and her book was originally published in 1952; still in print in a 2002 paperback edition by Faber & Faber. Only a few odd passages in it relate to transport; but the book does touch upon the coming to Cambridge of the bicycle, in the Chapter on "Ladies":

"First the tricycle, then the safety bicycle came in: and then bicycles gradually became the chief vehicles for ladies paying calls. They would even tuck up their trains and

ride out to dinner on them. One summer evening my parents rode ten miles to dine at Six Mile Bottom; their evening clothes were carried in cases on the handlebars; for of course you couldn't possibly dine without dressing. Right up to 1914 one also made some kind of change for dinner, even if one were alone; and for quite a small party full dress was usual. But when my mother came to dress that evening she found that, though the bodice and train were there, the skirt had been left behind – dresses were in three pieces then. So she had to borrow a very inharmonious skirt from her hostess, who was much shorter and stouter than herself. They rode back by moonlight."

RA

# Gladiator Mailvan

The Post Office Vehicle Club was contacted last November by Maria Donovan who lives in Melplash, near Bridport in Dorset, asking whether we could help in dating a photograph of a mailvan photographed outside a house. The photograph appears here. The only clues we had were the George V cypher and the registration F 377 clearly visible in the photograph. However the shape of the radiator didn't ring any bells with us, while registration F was issued by Essex C.C. registration office from 1904.

The George V cypher was a good start, as the King's reign did not start until 1910. Its likely date of registration and its Essex registration almost certainly pointed to a vehicle operated by a contractor on behalf of Royal Mail.

A trip to the Essex Record Office at Chelmsford revealed that registration F 377 was allocated to a Gladiator 12 h.p. van, 14 cwt. unladen weight, and fitted with a green (lined white) tonneau body. It was in service before the registration regulations came into force and was the penultimate vehicle to be registered on 1st January 1904 with Essex County Council by Herbert Henry Tummers of South Woodford, Essex.



Gladiator was not a chassis make known to us, but we have established that it was a French make, produced at Pré St Gervais, Seine, between 1902 and 1906. It was well known for its passenger cars in 1902 when a car-derived commercial with a 12 h.p. vertical-twin petrol engine and chain drive was announced. This was evidently the chassis of F 377. In 1904, the 12 h.p. was joined by a forward-control 2-tonner powered by the same engine but with a three-speed transmission.

Essex records show that F 377 was registered to Colonel Robert Williams M.P. of Bridehead, Dorchester on 19th April 1904, the M.P. for Dorchester. Quite how he was connected with South Woodford in Essex is not known, unless he lived in that area for easier access to Westminster. On 1st December 1910, the Essex records show F 377 was registered to George Bonfield of 66 West Street, Bridport. Maria was able to tell us that Bonfield had a motor business (with forecourt, pumps and a workshop) at that address in Bridport and they are now based at St. Andrew's Trading Estate in Bridport. We must assume that Bonfield removed the tonneau body and instead fitted the van body, presumably finished in red with ROYAL MAIL lettering and "Gv" cypher, after purchase, although nothing of this change is recorded in the Essex records.



Maria had also sent our photograph seeking information to *Bridport News* who published it in its edition of 12th November. This resulted in a contact with the granddaughter of the two people pictured on the left of the photograph. Her grandmother was the postmistress and her grandfather was a wheelwright who had a workshop nearby, while the house served as Melplash Post Office from 1897 to 1952. The photograph was taken by a Mr Porter, a professional photographer visiting from London. Other photographs have come to light including the view of the same postmen and a horse drawn vehicle with driver. Some of the photographs were dated August 1911 (written on the back) and we think that the two views record the change from horse power to petrol propulsion at around this time.

Maria and her partner Mike went one stage further and recreated the 1911 scene in November 2004, when the A3066 road between Bridport and Beaminster through Melpash was closed for repairs. Maria and Mike are shown in front of their house with a modern Vauxhall Combo 100cf. mailvan from Bridport and its postman-driver Julian.

*Reprinted from the January 2005 issue of the Post Office Vehicle Club's monthly magazine "Post Horn". For more information on the Club, please write to Frank Weston, 32 Russell Way, LEIGHTON BUZZARD, Bedfordshire, LU7 3NG or go to the Club website [www.POVehClub.org.uk](http://www.POVehClub.org.uk)*



## Who brought buses to Cartmel ?

At the end of August last year, my wife and I stopped off at Grange-over-Sands on our way back from Windermere. On what had been the sea-front walk - (most curious, no sea for about a mile, but a shaped 'sea-wall') - are placed many cast-iron benches in memoriam to local townsfolk etc. Each bench had a plaque attached to the back, with an appropriate inscription. One which caught my wife's eye read: "In memory of Charles Parker 1901 - 1989, founder of the first bus service in Grange-over-Sands in 1924"

I think that the reference to a bus operator must be quite unique in terms of memorial plaques, of which there must be thousands across the country and coast. I did write to Grange-over-Sands Civic Society, under whose auspices the plaques were installed - but to no avail.

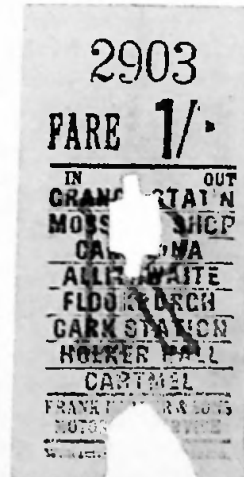
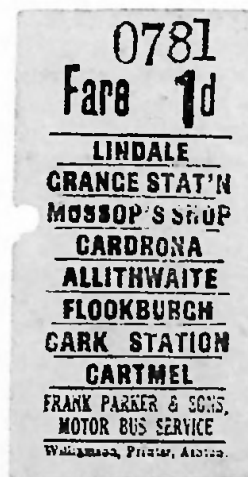
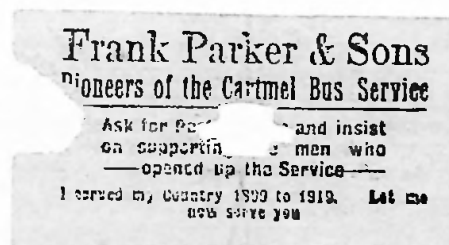
Peter Abel

When Peter Abel put that challenge to the Transport Ticket Society, an answer was found; but one that embodied a little more Parker family history than might have been expected.

Frank Parker & Sons operated a Grange - Allithwaite - Cark - Cartmel bus service, and on the backs of some their tickets appeared:

*Frank Parker & Sons Pioneers of the Cartmel Bus Service. Ask for Parkers' bus and insist on supporting the men who opened up the Service. I served my Country 1899 to 1919. Let me now serve you.*

Frank Parker & Sons sold their bus service to Ribble Motor Services Ltd in September 1930. They either continued as coach operators, or they resumed later in the 1930s. Parkers Motors Ltd was registered in 1938, with directors F, C E and F C Parker. The Excursions and Tours licences of Parkers Motors Ltd were sold to Ribble in May 1964. It is not unreasonable to guess that that was when Charles



Parker (born 1901, per the plaque) wished to retire. But was Charles, strictly entitled to be posthumously credited with being "founder of the first bus service"? What about his father, Frank - who served his Country from the Boer War to the end of the Great War - and then, admittedly aided by his sons, started the bus service? No, it is churlish to question Charles's right to his plaque. The memorial to his father is this ticket.

Roger Atkinson

## Association Matters

### ► CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS AT THE FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE COMPANY, 19 MARCH 2005

As everyone will agree, this is a rather remarkable occasion. We have wound up the Association, and renewed it as if nothing had changed. But I want to say a few things about us, before I stand down from the Chairmanship. I had been planning to do that for some time, but I felt I should carry on until certain recent problems had been dealt with, and, thanks to your Committee [in future, the Board], they can now be set aside.

The idea first came from the Railway and Canal Historical society, for whom I arranged a meeting at Birmingham Polytechnic on 28 November 1987. Of those present it is sad to recall the loss of Theo Barker, John Birks and John Dunabin, but others remain with us and some are here today. I then convened a further meeting at the same place on 18 March 1989, in the name of the Roads and Road Transport History Group. Then a meeting was held on 10 March 1990, at the Rolls-Royce Heritage Trust premises at Parkside, here in Coventry, with Ray Cook as Secretary. Gordon Knowles took over at about this time, and it was he who called a meeting at Coventry Polytechnic on 16 March 1991, chaired by Richard Storey and myself, when the speakers were Dorian Gerhold, Winstan Bond, John Birks and Theo Barker. The attendance of 78 people was remarkable. Committee meetings continued to be held at Parkside, and an inaugural meeting of the Conference was held on 14 March 1992. [I am indebted to Roger Atkinson for many of these details].

We owe so much to all who have worked to make the Association such a success. One name I would mention is that of Theo Barker, our first President, whose contribution was to set the pattern for our studies. Without identifying others, there has been the production of the newsletter, the preparation of our accounts and their approval by inspection, the essential secretarial business and the production of the minutes, and in recent months the time and effort put in by Roger, Gordon and Garry in dealing with the awkward business with the Science Museum. Neither must we forget the success of the *Companion to British Road Haulage History* and the work of John Armstrong and his team. We look forward to a similar achievement on the passenger side from the team working under the direction of Corinne Mulley. These are the sort of things we shall be remembered for.

The structure of the association plays a great part in its success. We originally set out to raise the status of our studies by bringing together the work of various organisations in our field, and it has been our Corporate Members that have given us the backing to do so. The study of history and the lessons that may be drawn from it is so much more than a hobby, as we all know. As well as our committed personal members I like to think of all the members of these organisations as members with us of our Association.

Over a decade and more I believe we have achieved a great deal. But there is more to be one, widening and strengthening our work and increasing our contribution to knowledge and to the understanding of the industry, its people, its hardware and its operation. Let us look to the future with confidence.

John Hibbs

### ► REPORT FROM HON RESEARCH CO-ORDINATOR, IAN YEARSLEY

This has been a fairly uneventful year for your Research Co-ordinator, though there have been some spin-offs from the Mitchell & Kenyon film presentations and broadcast series. Somebody asked me to look at a synopsis for a film script on tramway history and I suggested elements of bus development that needed to be brought into it. The phenomenon of the Titan is significant in the burial of the tram. One of our members was researching the question of why electric trams never came to his town and I was able to suggest some sources. And there have been a number of similar queries relating to buses and trolleybuses, but little on road freight transport.

I must here pay tribute to the *Companion to British Road Haulage History* which enabled me to make a contribution to the commentary on one of the Mitchell & Kenyon films shown in London on 22 February when a demountable horse-drawn household removals van came into view on the screen. Quick reference to the *Companion* identified this as a 'lift van' or 'sling van' with a body which could be transferred to a railway wagon for the long haul; a design of 1888, it was there in Bradford in 1902 and represented a significant stage in the long march of containerisation.

But, as I have said previously, I think the time has come for me to hand over to someone who is into the world of electronic communications which I find as a blank and impenetrable wall. We need someone, I suggest, who can take us forward into the cybernetic world of e-communications, e-mail, the internet, websites and all these other things which are outside my experience and competence.

I also suggest that it needs to be someone who is equally literate in the world of books, papers and print. Ten years ago it looked as though researchers would be handicapped if they were not e-literate. Now there is a new generation coming along who are not B-literate, they do not understand books. Some of them do not know how to research anything if it is not on the internet; worse still, some do not seem to know that books, papers and libraries exist at all as valid sources of information.

So we need a new research co-ordinator who can pull all these strands together and give people the confidence to step outside their habitual mode of doing things. I will still be around if people want to ask questions about history that I can answer from my limited ability. But I think the Association now needs someone who can be pro-active in the expanding world of research and I am therefore not offering to continue as your Hon. Research Co-ordinator.

I thank you for all your co-operation and encouragement in this task during the past eleven years. It has been an enjoyable and enlightening experience

Ian Yearsley, 19 March 2005

*The Board has invited A G Newman to come to a Board Meeting in July to discuss the role of the Research Co-ordinator, and whether he would wish to take on the post.*

## ► TOUR OF THE MUSEUM GUIDED BY BARRY COLLINS

After the Annual General Meetings on 19 March, Barry Collins took a large contingent of members around the Coventry Transport Museum - which took a good two hours and concentrated mainly on motor cars. The majority of cars in the collection had a Coventry connection although there were a few exceptions, including an immaculate Ford Escort, Jaguar, Standard, Hillman, Alvis, Riley, Triumph and Daimler spring to mind - the latter firm's only link with the man, Daimler, was that "he had sat upon the board for two years".

Some of the vehicles had travelled far to reach the museum including from the United States and New Zealand. Not all the cars on display were owned by the Museum - some were on permanent loan from private individuals, or from vehicle manufacturers.

There were three examples of "mock-ups" made locally. The only remaining large production manufacturer within the city boundary was now Carbodies who made complete taxis. (Peugot were at Ryton-on-Dunsmore). Legislation might threaten Carbodies; however, time would tell.

Two-thirds of the Museum space is out of use due to asbestos removal - a costly exercise. There is a plan to reintroduce buses and commercial vehicles to the displays - their former area being occupied by the Thrush cars at present. Thrush 2 broke the sound barrier and some technical risks were taken but without ill effect. The ten ton machine sported Rolls Royce engines (jet) and was in fact a "wingless aircraft". Its wheels were solid aluminium and it was steered from the rear - the driver could only see ahead for he was flanked by two large engines. Had the speed achieved been exceeded by another 5 m.p.h. it would have "taken off".

Remembering that it was the cycle industry which allowed that of motor car manufacture to develop, it was appropriate that the Museum's origins had come from a cyclist who had wished to donate his large collection of bikes to the city - there are now 300 cycles housed.

The guided tour closed with a look at some motorcycles - two of which had undertaken world tours and were displayed in "returned home" condition.

Although I am not a car enthusiast my interest was retained by the many stories and anecdotes related by Barry who is to be thanked for his time and the sharing of his knowledge to the group.

Roger F de Boer, 20 March 2005

## ► LINCOLNSHIRE ROAD TRANSPORT MUSEUM

Our Chairman, Garry Turvey and his wife were recently invited to visit the Lincolnshire Road Transport Museum, the 'second home' of R&RTHA members Paul and Joyce Jefford.

The Lincolnshire Vintage Vehicle Society, which runs the museum and cares for the vehicles, was established in 1959 and is one of the most successful volunteer led Societies of its type in the country. The museum recently gained official registration. It houses a wealth of road transport history and in addition to the large collection of

vehicles there are displays around the museum which capture scenes from yesteryear as well as artefacts which complement the vehicles. But above all, the museum is an active work place where enthusiasts painstakingly restore and maintain the vehicles most of which are still roadworthy and prove it on the two annual open days on Easter Sunday and the first Sunday in November.

Garry and his wife visited on the Tuesday following this year's Easter outing and marvelled both at the high quality of the vehicles and the driving skills of those charged with manoeuvring the vehicles in and out with hardly an inch to spare. However amongst so many treasures, one vehicle caught our Chairman's eye. That was a 1929 Chevrolet LQ 13 seater coach with Spicer bodywork in the livery of the White Heather company previously owned by Mr Jardine of Morecambe, Lancashire.

Garry remembers it as one of the coaches which used to ply for trade on the promenade at Morecambe in the immediate post-war years. Having only 13 seats it had two advantages over its larger rivals. Whilst drivers were reluctant to, or instructed not to, leave until they had a full load, "White Heather" was invariably the first away. Also it could venture into areas of Lakeland which were inaccessible to the competitors, proving not for the first time that large isn't always best.

The Museum is open May-October Monday to Friday 12 noon to 4pm and 10am to 4pm on Sundays. It opens from 1pm to 4pm, Sundays only, November-April. Website [www.lws.org.uk](http://www.lws.org.uk).

## ► NEW MEMBERS

The AA Motoring Trust (corporate member)  
The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (UK) (corporate member)  
John Dickson-Simpson, London W11  
Henry W T Frier, Poole  
Norwich Traffic Club (corporate member)  
John Stevens, South Africa  
The Transport Association, Epsom (corporate member)

This brings the total number of Corporate Members up to nineteen as follows:

The AA Motoring Trust  
The British Motor Industry Heritage Trust Archive  
Buses Worldwide  
The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (UK)  
The Commercial Vehicle & Road Transport Club  
Coventry Transport Museum  
The Institute of Railway Studies  
The Kithead Trust  
London's Transport Museum  
The National Cycle Archive  
Norwich Traffic Club  
The Omnibus Society  
Post Office Vehicle Club  
The PSV Circle  
The Railway & Canal Historical Society  
The Road Haulage Association  
The Tramway Museum Society  
The Transport Association  
The Transport Ticket Society

Sadly, we have to report the death of Roy Bevin. His obituary appears elsewhere in this issue.



► **SYMPOSIUM**

Arrangements for the 2005 Symposium in Chester on Friday/Saturday 14th/15th October have been finalised and the booking form and further details will be distributed under separate cover either shortly before or shortly after this edition of the Newsletter. The programme is as follows:

**Friday 14th October 2005 commencing at 9 pm:**

An illustrated presentation of transport highlights from the Mitchell & Kenyon Collection.

**Saturday 15th October 2005**

commencing with tea/coffee at 10.30 am:

**Ian Yearsley**, speaking on the lessons for transport history from the Mitchell & Kenyon Collection.

**Geoffrey Jones** speaking on the 75th Anniversary of the establishment of the Traffic Commissioners under the Road Traffic Act of 1930.

~~~~~ *Buffet Lunch* ~~~~~

**Bert Morris**, Director, AA Motoring Trust, speaking on the centenary of the Automobile Association.

**Geoffrey Hilditch**, well-known, retired municipal bus General Manager, speaking on his industry experiences.

► **WEBSITE**

The Association has a new website, [www.rrtha.org.uk](http://www.rrtha.org.uk), which is greatly expanded from the previous version hosted by the Transport Ticket Society. It is primarily intended for enquiries and potential members to learn a little more about our activities, but it does include a page on Research Projects being undertaken by members and seeking help with their projects. If you would like your project featured on this page, please e-mail ([roadsandrtha@aol.com](mailto:roadsandrtha@aol.com)) or write to Chris Hogan with your details. If you write, please include your own e-mail address (if you have one).

Our thanks to David Harman for designing the pages and setting up the website for us.

► **PROSPECTUS**

We have also redesigned the membership prospectus to reflect the limited company status and change of Registered Office. If you would like a few copies to help with the recruitment challenge, please contact Chris Hogan.

► **A CLASSIC ERROR**

Even meticulous proof-reading did not spot an Editorial error on page 9 of *Newsletter 41*. Oh dear! Calling our revered and long-standing member, the Commercial Vehicle & Road Transport Club, "the Classic Commercial Vehicle Club" was unpardonable. My apologies.

Ed RA

*Newsletter No.43*

- The target date for issue of No.43 is  
8 September 2005.
- Contributions by 6 August, please
- Provisional target date for No. 44 is  
8 December, 2005
- Contributions by 5 November
- The 2005 subscription covers Nos.41 to 44

*In Newsletter No.43  
it is hoped to include:*

- Notes on various Centenaries and Anniversaries that fall in 2005.
- "Centenary" -- a wide ranging article by John Aldridge
- One or two items held over from Nos.41 or 42
- And hopefully, you, the readers, will keep up a steady flow of Letters, Introducing our Members, and articles.

**ROY PERCIVAL STANLEY BEVIN – 1919 - 2005**

Roy Bevin died peacefully early on Sunday 5th June 2005 in Warwick Hospital after a short illness. He had been admitted to hospital at the end of May, on his 86th birthday.

He was born in Bristol but by the time he started school, the family had moved to the London area. He joined the family firm that imported and distributed Brillo cleaning products in the U.K. and spent the whole of his working life with the company apart from his service in the Army during the war.

Roy was the archetypal generalist, whose transport interests extended to all forms of surface transport with particular emphasis on railways, buses and commercial vehicles. He was a member of a large number of transport societies and the coffee table at his home at

Chipping Campden was always covered by the latest publications of the various societies of which he was a member. He was an active supporter of the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway and for many years performed booking office duties at Toddington, Winchcombe and Cheltenham Racecourse stations. He was very proud to have been presented to HRH The Princess Royal when she visited the reopened Racecourse station in 2003.

Roy joined the Association in 1994 and was a regular attendee at our Coventry meetings. He has also acted as an Examiner of our accounts for the last nine years and will be greatly missed by the Association. The Association was represented at his funeral at Oakley Wood Crematorium, Leamington Spa on 14th June.

## Introducing our Members

*Any new (or existing) member who would care to compose a paragraph or two about themselves may send it to the Editor for possible inclusion in a subsequent Newsletter.*

*One new member included in the list on the previous page contrived, wholly legitimately, to introduce himself by way of a Letter in Newsletter 41. That was John Stevens of Dundee, South Africa; his letter appeared, over the name Robert Stevens, last month.*

### Norwich Traffic Club

The Norwich Traffic Club was formed in 1933 as 'an organisation of proprietors and managing or supervisory persons engaged in all forms of transport for the consideration of national and local transport problems'. Over the years, the Club contributed to discussions on local and national transport policy across the modes. For example, it worked with local government on Weak Bridges, with the City Council on traffic management and traffic engineering, and contributed to the debate on Nationalisation.

Apart from a short break at the outbreak of World War 2, the Club has held meeting without interruption. Today, the membership is about 100 people, all engaged in or retired from some function of transport, or the engineering, planning and commercial disciplines associated with it. The Meetings are monthly from October to May inclusive, for a Wednesday Luncheon, with guest speakers.

The Committee seeks to create a balance between Road (including bus), Rail, Sea (including ports) and Air interests. For more information contact the Club Secretary, Christopher Taylor on Tel/Fax (01362) 820395, or write to him at The Banda, Shipdham, Norfolk IP25 7ND.

### Coventry Transport Museum

The Coventry Transport Museum is a long-standing member of the R&RTHA. It has provided a room – and normally a very adequate and pleasant room – for many years for our half-yearly meetings. The next one is on Saturday 3 September 2005. Fuller details will be sent out nearer the time; but please note the date.

These meetings are normally well attended, and interesting. Travelling to Coventry from distant places usually allows far too little time for actually looking at the Museum itself. So members who came to the March AGM were glad to avail themselves of the guided tour by Barry Collins, the Museum's Information and Archive Officer. (Roger de Boer's report of the tour is on an earlier page).

March was a particularly appropriate time. The Museum had the honour of being short-listed for the Gulbenkian Prize for Museum of the Year (awarded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation). Coventry was not the eventual winner; the 2005 Prize has gone to The Big Pit, National Museum of Wales, at Blaenafon. However, Coventry was a worthy contestant; some more notes by Barry Collins follow:

### Coventry Transport Museum - 25 years Old This Year

The origins of today's Coventry Transport Museum lie with the late Sammy Bartleet, an avid local collector of cycles who donated his entire collection to the City of Coventry in 1937, though it was only in 1952 that the first car was acquired. Until 1960 virtually all the collection was stored in local authority buildings throughout the city but with the opening that year of the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum many of the vehicles (at last) went on public display.

By 1979 lack of display space was a severe problem and this, combined with the rapid decline of the local car industry, led to the establishment of the Museum of British Road Transport, which was officially opened by the Lord Mayor on 5th October 1980. From the beginning only vehicles that have either been assembled in Coventry and/or that contain a significant proportion of locally made components, were (and are) collected. Like all policies though there are occasional exceptions to the rule. Hence the collection includes non-Coventry makes such as AEC, Austin, Ford, Morris and Scammell to name just a few. At present the collection comprises approximately 250 cars, buses and commercial vehicles, 100 motorcycles and 300 cycles. The oldest powered vehicle is an 1897 Daimler Wagonette and the newest the first diesel prototype X-type Jaguar, made in 2001.

In the past three years, as part of an urban regeneration project, considerable demolition and rebuilding has taken place in and around the area on which the Museum stands, this being funded by grants from government agencies, the National Lottery and Coventry City Council. This resulted in the March 2004 opening of a large extension and new frontage along with several new galleries and exhibitions since. And the old long-winded title changed to Coventry Transport Museum. At the same time the Museum ceased to be part of Coventry City Council and became an independent Trust. Later this year work will begin at the back of the Museum on a new extension capable of accommodating larger vehicles such as buses and this, along with the revamped area adjacent to it, will form the new commercial vehicle gallery. This will bring the Museum's total floor space to over 120,000 square feet (11,100 square metres).

The one 'downside' to the redevelopment has been the discovery of significant amounts of asbestos throughout the building, leading over the past two years to one area after another being closed to allow decontamination of those areas and their contents by specialist contractors. So far this has cost several million pounds, though because the building is local authority owned, it is they that are footing the bill rather than the Museum. The date currently being given for final completion is April next year.

## Book Reviews

### ONE ELEVEN SQUADRON

– Russell Davies Ltd, a transport legend.

By Simon Waspe

Published by Baron Books of Buckingham

ISBN 0-86023-676-5

Available from the author: Simon Waspe, Boyton Lodge, Combs Lane, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 3BL, price £35.00 plus £3.50 post and packing.

No, this is not a history of one of the RAF's premier fighter units, as the title might suggest, because the 'one-eleven squadron' referred to in the title is the vast fleet of Scania tractor units of this model formerly operated by Russell Davies Ltd. This massive book takes the reader through the life and times of one of the best known British container haulage firms, from its earliest days when Russell Davies began a small haulage company in South Wales during the late 1930s. After the war the business revolved around coal haulage and passenger transport with a fleet of more than 20 lorries and five coaches. The haulage arm developed steadily, but following Russell's sudden death in 1961 it was sold to a P&O company, Coastal Roadways.

At that time, Russell's son Glyn was just 12 years old and when he left school he went on to work for P&O Containers, based in the embryonic port of Felixstowe. Glyn soon decided to branch out on his own and with his brother-in-law, Ron Davies, as a partner, resurrected the name of Russell Davies. Trading began on 7 January 1974 using three new Scania 110 tractor units, with both Glyn and Ron gaining their HGV driving licences to run the office by day and drive by night when the need arose. The early chapters of the book set the scene and describe the formation of Russell Davies Ltd, showing the insight the author has gained into the development and operation of a haulage company. The story is told with frequent references to contemporary reports in the transport and local press, together with narratives from the company's principals and drivers. The Russell Davies operation was characterised by firm financial control, but with the recession of the 1980s it too had to find cost-saving measures, introducing driver-training schemes to help improve the average fuel consumption. In parallel, a number of the employed drivers were helped to set up on their own as owner-drivers.

The book also highlights the linkage between growth of the Port of Felixstowe and that of Russell Davies Ltd, together with the development of vehicles, equipment and operating techniques needed to cater for changes to legislation, and to reduce running costs to the bare minimum. As well as the employed drivers, there is liberal reference to the many and varied sub-contractors and owner-drivers over the years, allowing the reader to gain a clear insight into how container haulage was organised on such a vast scale. Throughout the narrative there are frequent references to individual vehicles by their registration numbers and driver's name. This is excellent material in the context of social history, although the detail does impede readability of the text; this book is not a light bedtime read.

Opening of the Orwell crossing in December 1982 sped container traffic to Felixstowe, leading to the development of associated companies such as Port Container Services, offering specialist container handling services, including the repair and refurbishment of containers. Descriptions of these developments are cocooned in the steady thread of anecdotes from former drivers, descriptions of vehicles and comprehensive details of types and registration numbers. The many anecdotes are an important strength of the narrative, adding flesh and blood to what might otherwise be a rather bony skeleton of facts and data. Some tales are quite hair raising, such as that of one driver who was with his vehicle in the hold of a roll-on roll-off vessel in the harbour at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, when it started to capsize due to incorrect unloading – he got himself and his lorry out before the ship finally rolled onto its side.

The astonishing array of photographs depicts all aspects of the company's operations, from its earliest beginnings. There is extensive photographic coverage of depots and drivers, including the many liveries worn by vehicles in the contracted fleets. The photographs are supported by comprehensive captions and an awesome fleet list, although I do not have the personal notes to give an independent view on just how complete and accurate it is. If the reader wishes to track down the activities of a particular person, there is a huge index containing references to several hundred drivers and other individuals connected with the company.

The end of the Russell Davies era came on 12 May 1995, when the company was acquired by the Securicor Group plc. At that time the UK's largest container carrier, Russell Davies Ltd had a workforce of over 1,400, more than 800 vehicles and a turnover in excess of £110 million. Glyn and Ron Davies stayed with Securicor Omega Container Logistics for two years, remaining under a restrictive covenant for a total of five years from the sale of their thriving business. The path for Glyn Davies back into road haulage came in 1999 with the purchase of Goodway and, in 2000, Loadwell Transport, both of which were amalgamated to form Hanbury Davies Containers, which in less than five years has already become a mighty name in the world of UK container haulage.

Without doubt, the partnership of Glyn and Ron Davies was as magical as the name Russell Davies became. Simon Waspe has fully captured the flavour of that magic in *One Eleven Squadron*. This is a huge book, weighing in at a hefty 384 pages in A4 size; it is hard-bound and has a full-colour dustjacket. Significantly, there are just fewer than 600 photographs (the majority in colour). At £35 the book appears expensive and at times the sheer amount of information being hurled at the reader can make it difficult to read. However, if you have any interest in the development of modern container transport and a social history of modern road haulage, then this book fully deserves a place in your library.

Bill Taylor

**SURREY AND THE MOTOR**

*The story of roads development (and related legislation), motor sport and vehicle manufacturing in the county*  
 Gordon Knowles, 2004; Surrey Industrial History Group  
 9¼" x 6" softback; 225 pages; 95 black & white pictures;  
 ISBN 0-9538122-3-5;  
 Price £10.95

Some people might consider it a foolhardy act to agree to review a book written by senior officer of an Association whose membership one values!

However I am pleased to say Gordon's is a good book. It has clearly been written as a permanent record of serious research, and I have learned much from it. It draws on information gathered by the author for his adult education lecture series and on the work of the late Francis Haveron of the Surrey Industrial History Group of the Surrey Archaeological Society. It is a work for dipping into by those in search of information, a process much helped by a 15-page index. But it is not just a collection of knowledge bites. Much of it is the continuous story of businesses and institutions that keeps one reading on – helped occasionally by a shameless piece of political incorrectness.

Much of the discussion about legislation was familiar to me: fulfilling childhood ambitions of becoming a roadman I joined the Highways Trunk Roads Division of the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation in 1955, when the post-war roads programme was gaining momentum.

We are treated to some interesting "firsts". A Surrey man, John Henry Knight, developed one of the first British stationary engines in 1889. He also designed the only British car exhibited at the first British Motor Show at the Crystal Palace in May 1896 and may have been the first to drive a British car on a public road – in July 1895.

Knowing little of Brooklands and the people who designed, produced and competed in all those racing and sports cars, I enjoyed venturing into this dashing, dangerous and often dodgy other world. I can only dimly sense the glory and drama of those chain-driven dinosaurs, a "Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang" (yes, it really was called that) with "23 litre 6-cylinder German Maybach aero engine developing some 300 bhp." And one can only guess what it was like to bump around the Brooklands concrete in an Austin Seven "with twin Zenith carburettors and a streamlined aluminium body with a pointed tail" at 75 mph in 1924.

The oldest extant purpose-built multi-storey car factory in the world is the Rodboro Building in Guildford, built for the Dennis brothers in 1901 and renovated in the 1990s. The Dennis story was made particularly interesting for me by personal memories from the 1940s of Aldershot and District Strachan-bodied Dennis Lancets on Service 33 and a 1939 Dennis-bodied Pike, GPF 117, belonging to J and M A Mitchell of Warnham, originally with Yellow Bus Services, Guildford. Dennis brothers started with bicycles and went on to a motorised tricycle driven up Guildford High Street at "a furious pace of 16 mph" in 1899, a quadricycle, cars, commercials, fire engines, lawn mowers, refuse vehicles, buses and airfield vehicles.

This section of the book contains a number of statements differing from what I have long understood to be the case. On page 98 we read that the London General Omnibus Co

and Aldershot and District Traction Co were almost totally Dennis equipped. Certainly Aldershot and District bought mainly Dennis chassis between 1919 and 1954, but the main supplier to the LGOC was traditionally AEC (the Associated Equipment Co Ltd). A and D bus and coach bodies were generally supplied by Strachans, not Hall, Lewis and Co Ltd. The Lance double decker was introduced in 1930, not 1950, and the Lancet single decker in 1931, not 1951 (see picture on page 99). The 1953 Strachan-bodied, underfloor-engined Lancet UE, KOT 600, was not purchased by A and D, merely being on hire from Dennis for a year (page 103). The illustration on that page shows another one-off bus, HOU 900, a prototype Dennis Dominant with Strachan body, the only one ever built, which I remember trundling around the streets of Aldershot for fourteen years. Finally, the Dennis story seems incomplete without a reference to the Dominator double decker that did indeed dominate the South Yorkshire scene throughout the 1980s. These few points make me wonder whether the necessary processes of collection, collation and compression of information may have led to some inaccuracies of detail in other areas also.

Again I am familiar with some of the subjects of Gordon's final chapter. There is an Abbott-bodied Albion Victor coach, AAA 756, formerly with King Alfred, Winchester, in preservation at the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum. I rode regularly in Southdown Leyland Leopards carrying the last bus bodies to be built at Addlestone. Mitchell of Warnham in the 1940s/50s ran a King and Taylor-bodied Leyland Tiger PS1, LPX 729, and Whitson-bodied Maudslay, JPO 631 and Bedford OB, JPX 15.

I like the illustrations a lot. But is that van on page 199 really a Trojan – or is it just a Morris J type?

I particularly like the attention paid in this book to the people behind the machines described – because it is easy to forget that vehicles are about people: designed and made by people; driven and maintained by people; ridden in by people; abused and destroyed by people; occasionally preserved and restored by people; and, not least, written about by people.

I like it a lot.

Paul Jefford

**HORSE TRANSPORT IN LONDON**

By Samantha Ratcliffe

Published by London's Transport Museum  
 with Tempus Publishing Ltd, The Mill, Brimscombe Port,  
 Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 2QG  
 ISBN 0-7524-3458-6  
 Price £12.99

The author is a curator at London's Transport Museum and in this book she has assembled more than 200 illustrations of horse-drawn cabs, buses and trams from the museum's collection. These give a varied and vivid impression of the horse drawn era and its traffic; some pictures are known but many less so. London General Omnibus Company's attempt at a canvas top cover and a London Southern Tramways' low-height car at West Norwood are particularly interesting, as are the poignant pictures of piles of discarded harness at the close of horse operation.

As a picture book it is good value for its price and the

quality of reproduction is excellent. Some caution will be needed in using it as a historical source, since the title implies that it describes all London horse transport whereas it covers only the public passenger transport element. Statistics are somewhat fugitive, but if one takes (not from this book) the 1893 estimates of W J Gordon quoted by Professor Ralph Turvey in his significant paper *Work Horses in Victorian London*, of the total of 150,000 working horses, 33,100 or 22% were in freight transport and 40,000 or 27% were hauling private carriages. So the new book covers little more than half of London's horse transport.

It is worth noting also that horse freight transport survived long after passenger work, a point made by Theo Barker and Dorian Gerhold in *The Rise and Rise of Road Transport* (1993).

This is underlined by one of the most unusual pictures in Ratcliffe's book, of a horse bus being used in 1944 as a

delivery van by Dolland and Aitchison, the opticians. Ratcliffe lists ten important references, the earliest dating from 1971. W J Gordon's *The Horse World of London* (1893) would be a useful addition, and among other sources quoted by Turvey are D Kinnear Clark's *Tramways their Construction and Working* (1894, reprinted by Adam Gordon in 1992, a mine of London horse data) and Theo Barker and Michael Robbins' *A History of London Transport* (1963). The Omnibus Society's *Trams and Buses of the Great Cities in the 1880s* reprint gives valuable data on the North Metropolitan and London Tramways companies. And there is a lot to be gleaned, on the cab trade and its licensing particularly, from Anna Sewell's reforming novel *Black Beauty*, published in 1877.

All in all this new book is a useful addition to pictorial knowledge and it is to be hoped that the author will follow it with a similar work on the other half of London's horse transport.

Ian Yearsley, Tramway Museum Society

## Book Notices

### LONDON TRANSPORT IN THE 1940s

By Michael H C Baker

Published by Ian Allan in 2003

ISBN 0-7110-2918-0

Price £15.99 (but understood now to be being 'remaindered')

Primarily a picture book; and initially ignored by your reviewer. In this case, a scorn for 'picture books' turned out to be misguided snobbery. As well as having some quite interesting wartime and post-war pictures, the book does have an accompanying text. This text does such remarkable justice to the wartime period that it distinguishes this book and makes it one to be highly recommended. The author, in his quite brief Introduction, shows an impressive understanding of the course of the war, which inspires confidence that the detail that follows in the individual chapters is likely to be soundly based. The post-war period is also well observed – with too much intricate detail on vehicles for your reviewer's taste; but that is when you skim it as a picture book. Thankfully, the pictures include several crowd and street scenes, not just interminable buses.

Roger Atkinson

### AN UNDERWORLD AT WAR ~ *Spivs, deserters, racketeers & civilians in the Second World War*

Donald Thomas

John Murray, 2003; paperback edition 2004

429pp.; illustrated; ISBN 0 7195 6340 2;

£8.99 (Paperback)

The reprinted article 'Government and road haulage' in *Newsletter* 42 opens up the hugely complicated and interesting story of road transport, of both goods and passengers, in wartime. In this context, readers might like to be aware of this wonderfully detailed but carefully organised study. Topics of road haulage relevance include 'jump-up' thefts, 'working out', the targetting of food and cigarette transport, disguised vehicles, over-charging (one case involving the aptly named firm of Over Brothers), deserter drivers, and large-scale looting by lorry. Lest road

haulage might seem from this catalogue to have been peculiarly prone to criminal activity, railway-located theft is also given coverage (pp.128-30).

Richard Storey

Your Editor was moved by Richard Storey's review to rush out and buy *An Underworld at War*. It has proved to be a fascinating book, with an excellent, and potentially useful, index. So what follows is not at all meant to decry it; but there do seem to have evolved two 'traps' into which writers about periods more than, say, fifty years ago, are prone to fall. *An Underworld at War* scrupulously avoids one of them, but falls into the other. One trap is to elide the different periods of the war into one vague overall era of blackout and austerity. Neither this book, nor *London Transport in the 1940s* (reviewed above) falls into that trap at all. But *An Underworld at War* does appear to tacitly assume that because nowadays 'everyone' owns and uses a motor car, (or, at least, much urban planning is on the basis that 'everyone' does so – John Edser has something to say on that earlier in this *Newsletter*), the same applied in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. The book refers in several places to petrol rationing, the eventual abolition of even a basic petrol ration for private motoring and to the inevitable black market in petrol, and a trade in stolen or forged petrol coupons. Fair enough — those goings-on did happen; but in the 1940s, they were very much minority pursuits. When we come to the chapter on "Going to the Dogs" and the high attendances, heavy betting (and some criminality) associated with greyhound racing, the subject of petrol rationing is again introduced, with an implication – admittedly not literally expressed – "how could people get to a dog track except by car?".

This may malign the author, but no acknowledgment is evident in the book that at least 98% of the thousands going to Odsal in Bradford or to Harringay in London, will have arrived either on foot or by tram, trolleybus or motor bus, (with a



handful perhaps by train). Have we reached a point that to anyone nowadays educated enough to be an author, it may not even cross their minds that half a century ago local public transport was widely and regularly used, even by people of their status?

Ed.RA

# SCOTT OF AMWELL : DR. JOHNSON'S QUAKER CRITIC

David Perman

Ware: Rockingham Press, 2001

304pp.; illustrated.; ISBN 1 873468 72 5;

£9.95 (paperback)

Picking up another theme in issue 41, the turnpike road system, a somewhat belated note on this excellent biography may serve to draw readers' attention to a figure otherwise largely known as a 'Quaker poet'. John Scott (1731-83) was, however, also active in public affairs,

notably poor relief and highway and turnpike trust administration in east Hertfordshire, where his family from London finally settled in 1740. Their house lay on the road from Ware to Hertford, the condition of which was adversely affected by its proximity to the New River (built to carry drinking water to London). Impatience with the state of the road and charitable make-work sentiment led Scott to act in his private capacity and also to become a turnpike trustee. From this he progressed to write *Digests of the General Highway and Turnpike Laws*, which was published in 1778, receiving both contemporary and posthumous praise. By modern standards Scott's was a short life, but it was full of varied experience and achievements, some not readily associated with a member of the Society of Friends in the mid-eighteenth century, and this biography does him justice. Potential readers should be aware that the full apparatus of notes, Scott bibliography and index is only published in the hardback edition.

Richard Storey

## Delving

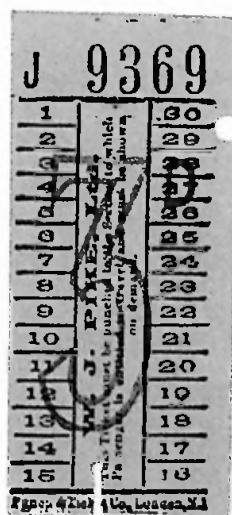
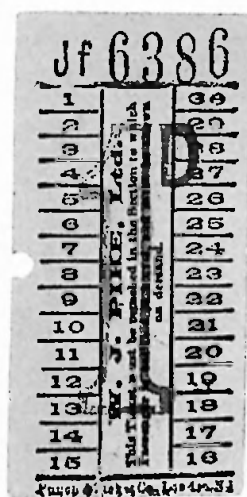
In our last issue (page 20), we learned how our member, Alan Shardlow, was delving into the history of Tom Atkin, the first Managing Director of Road Services (Caledonian) Ltd, when it was formed in the 1950s on the denationalisation of road haulage. The notes which follow throw no further light on Tom Atkin himself, but they do portray a facet of the company that may not be widely known.

The story starts in London more than 150 years ago, when William James Pike started a furniture removal business in Chelsea. From small beginnings it grew to a concern owning about eighty horses.

After the death of its founder, a limited company W J Pike Ltd was registered on 25 January 1910. After the War, the fleet was mechanised, but the company also branched into motor charabancs. The 1925/6 edition of the Motor Transport Year Book records a rolling stock of Thornycroft and Karrier 28-seater motor coaches. "Total number of vehicles – not available".

"London's Buses, Volume 1" (of which our member, Reg Westgate was a co-author), tells us at pp.139-140 that, in 1924 and 1925, three Dennis double-deck motor buses were bought. These used the fleet name "Favourite". However, it was not this fleet name, but the W J Pike Ltd name, that appeared on the backs of tickets, illustrated here. The bus operation was fairly short-lived, the buses being sold in

August 1927 to the London Public Omnibus Co Ltd. There followed a company reconstruction as W J Pike (1927) Ltd, but the Pike family interest lasted until 1952, more than a century after the business had started. The controlling interest then passed to Mountain Transport Services Ltd, another Chelsea-based company, of which a Mr D Mountain was the Chairman. This company was recorded in "The Little Red Book", (published by "Passenger Transport"), in its 1955/6 edition as owning over thirty buses and coaches, used on contracts or under Excursions & Tours licences; it seems that the Pike company continued separately as furniture removers.



"London's Buses" (already cited) records that in November 1955, Mountain Transport Services Ltd disposed of the Pike company to Road Services (Caledonian) Ltd. At an Extraordinary General meeting held in Glasgow on 3 February 1960, the Pike company was wound up. The authors of "London's Buses" comment: "It is doubtful whether by this time there was anybody still connected with the business who could recall the far off days of the 'twenties when it ran buses on London streets".



The various strands of transport history can extend in surprising directions.

RA

## "Caterpillar" at Work

*From the Blackpool Gazette & Herald 20 June 1925*

A new aid to the development and completion of Blackpool's new park has been called into requisition during the past few days. This is simply a marvel of human skill and ingenuity.

It takes the form of a "Caterpillar Tractor" that removes earth as though by magic. It may be described as in some respects a development of the famous "Tank". The tractor itself is on "caterpillar" wheels, and it proceeds gaily on its way, towing after it a series of diggers that dig, collect and deposit the earth in truly marvellous fashion.

It has been primarily obtained in order to excavate the 27 acre lake that is to be the crowning glory of the new Park next year. It makes light work of this task. It strolls up to a hillock with the airy nonchalance that its forefathers showed to a series of German pillboxes or entrenchments during the war, and soon the earth is removed.

On an average it excavates 2 cubic yards a minute on the roughest ground, and still comes up smiling, as though able to better this if the occasion arose.

In calling in the assistance of this wonderful machine, which has attracted the attention this week of both the Parks Committee and the members of the local Rotary Club, Blackpool has once more led the way, since this is the first time it has been seen in Lancashire. Not content with removing anything that opposes it, it proceeds to trample it firmly underfoot. Although modelled closely on the wartime tank, ten years experience and experiment have been embodied in it.



And the man who drives it is probably one of the happiest in Blackpool at the present time. He is an ex-member of the Tank Corps, and it is for him largely a return to his old love.

Blackpool has yet another new attraction for those who are at all interested in mechanical transport and development.

### ABSURD TRAFFIC BY-LAWS

*From The Commercial Motor 18 November 1919*

Local authorities may make by-laws, but the confirmation of the Home Office is required, hence the authorities can intervene when they think local authorities go too far.

With every good intention Hull Corporation made a new by-law to prevent traffic accidents at level crossings. There have been some nasty mishaps in the city, due to mechanically-propelled vehicles running into closed level crossing gates, and the corporation by-law sought to make it a punishable offence for drivers to pull up under ten yards from a gate, and for the imposition of a fine not exceeding £5 for such an offence.

The Home Office now writes to Hull expressing sympathy ..... but doubting whether

the by-law will in practice be effective.

The Home Office proceeds to point out that if a vehicle is being driven slowly, there is no risk approaching close to the gates; on the other hand, if it is being driven too fast and the brakes are not good, a limit of 10 yards might be too short.

Moreover, the Home Office asks how it is proposed to enforce the by-law. If, says the department, a constable is stationed at each crossing, no by-law would be necessary, since he would be able to hold up the traffic at a reasonable distance from the gates. If a constable is not stationed at each crossing, the enforcement of the by-law would be difficult .....

In conclusion the Home Office declares that "it is undesirable to create fresh criminal offences except on strong grounds".

The Watch Committee has now decided to recommend the corporation to rescind the by-law.