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Early Years of the Brigg Turnpike Trust

Peter White

Introduction

The market town of Brigg lies in the north-west of the historic county of Lincolnshire, traditionally within the administrative county of Lindsey, but today within the unitary authority area of North Lincolnshire. It lies about 40 km north of Lincoln, slightly to the east of the historic route of the Roman Ermine Street which follows the limestone Lincoln Heights to the Humber at Winteringham. It is located on the River Ancholme, served both by the river itself and its navigable canalised form constructed in the eighteenth century. Until the development of Scunthorpe, the major steel centre about 12km to its north west from the late nineteenth century, Brigg was the principal market town for a wide area, extending as far as the Trent and the Humber, bounded to the south by the catchment areas of Gainsborough and Market Rasen, to the east by Caistor, and north by Barton-on-Humber.

In common with many other regions, Lincolnshire sought to improve the quality of its communications by development of turnpike roads from the late eighteenth century, and the Trust established to cover a number of roads radiating from Brigg offers an example of this process. The early 1760s saw a number of turnpike Acts passed relating to roads in the county, following earlier Acts such as that for the section of the Great North Road between Spittlegate Hill (near Grantham) and Little Drayton in 1725. Among these was the Brigg Turnpike Trust Act of 1764 (5 Geo III) which the road from Lincoln to Barton-on-Humber via Brigg, and others radiating from the town, notably to the adjoining market town of Caistor, and east-north-east to Melton Ross. A general account of turnpikes in Lincolnshire is provided by Neil Wright's 'Lincolnshire Towns and Industry 1790-1914', Volume XI of the 'History of Lincolnshire' series published by the History of Lincolnshire

Committee in 1982 (which includes a comprehensive map on page 34).

The activities of the Trust were recorded in its minutes, which at the time this research was conducted, were deposited in the county archives at Lincoln (Stubbs 1/1). The first year or so is examined in detail, with reference also made in to major developments in later years.

Establishment of the Trust

On 7th June 1765, some thirty Trustees met at Brigg and appointed John Turner as Clerk. He was joined by Edward Holgate of Roxby as Treasurer. It was decided to pay interest at 5% on the £4,000 capital of the undertaking, and it was stated that some £291 had been spent by the Clerk in obtaining the Act. Thereafter, the Trustees met about once a month in Brigg, generally at the Angel of the White Hart, in order to decide policy. It is noticeable that the number attending meetings soon declined to a regular dozen or so.

At the second meeting, on 21st June, the location of toll bars and their associated houses was fixed as follows:

On the road to Barton Waterside [from which a ferry to Hull operated], near the water mill.

At the north end of Wrawby Street in Brigg [i.e. the eastern edge of the town]

In Bigby Street in Brigg

At the south end of Claxby Lane, across the High Road to Caistor.

On the 'New Bridge' [probably that over the canalised Ancholme] in Brigg, on the Lincoln Road [i.e. the western end of the town]

Riseholme Lodge Corner, north of Lincoln

A proposed gate between Riseholme and Brigg (a section of about 37 km) was later rejected. Not more than one toll per day was to be paid on each road (i.e. Lincoln – Brigg – Barton, Brigg – Caistor, and Brigg – Melton). Finally, William Robinson of

Conisborough, Yorks., was appointed surveyor at £50 per annum.

At their third meeting, on 8th July, the Trustees began to allocate contracts for improving sections of the roads concerned. The Trustees themselves often provided the persons who contracted to do the work. Thus Sir Cecil Wray agreed to build the turnpike from the north of Redbourn [about 10 km south west of Brigg] to the southern terminus at Riseholme, at £90 per mile. It was to be 'ramparted' 10 yards with stone and gravel covering a strip 6 yards wide. A depth of 5 inches was to be formed at the edge, 15 inches at the crown. The Rev. Carter agreed to make the turnpike through Redbourn lordship at the same rate per mile, while Robert Taylor and John Ross, who were to cover the New Bridge – Redbourn section, were allowed £120 per mile. Edward Holgate was to receive £525 for the section "between the two bridges near Brigg". Wray and Carter were allowed two years in which to complete their work, Taylor and Ross one year, while Holgate was asked to complete his section as soon as possible. In view of this and the fact that he was paid at such a high rate, it seems reasonable to assume that this section of road was in the worst condition when turnpiking began.

Further contracts were made on 22nd July with Lawrence Monch (for the whole length of Glentworth, at £90 per mile) and George Taylor Tufnoll, one of the Trustees, for the section through Brattleby Lordship, again at £90 per mile. Each contractor was allowed two days statute labour in making his section of the turnpike. Contracts for building of toll-houses were also fixed at this time. Edward Johnson and William Alcock of Barton were to make the toll-bar at that town.

On 27 August a further section of Wray's contract was handed over when Edmund Lonsdale and Charles Slater agreed to make the turnpike within Waddington parish [on the Brigg – Lincoln section]. Thomas Leedham and Company contracted for the Barton Waterside – Elsham Hill section at 9 shillings per rood.

The turnpiking of the sections to road east from Brigg to Elsham Hill (on the main Barton – Lincoln route), Bigby (on the branch to Caistor) and Wrawby (on the Bigby road) to Melton Ross was

performed by local contractors directly under the surveyor. Mr Robinson himself contracted with the Trustees to build the section between Brigg and Wrawby Moor at 10/6 per rood. Six yards width of gravel was to be laid, six inches deep at the edge, eighteen inches at the centre. The contractors working under the surveyor included Alexander Thompson (Brigg to Wrawby Moor) at 11/6, and Thomas Dunderdale (Elsham Hill Top – Wrawby Moor).

The start of toll collection

On 17th September 1765 the Trustees appointed toll gatherers: William Crowther (Barton), William Kay (New Bridge), Charles Evans (Wrawby and Brigg) and Henry Brooks (Bigby and Brigg). Their wage was to be 5/- per week (increased by 1/- in May 1766). Tolls were to be taken at the gates from 6th October 1765. The meeting also made arrangements for local sub-contractors to remove stones and gravel from various points in order to make up the road surfaces.

At the meeting of 21st October 1765, the Trustees agreed with some local residents for the latter to compound toll payments for an annual sum, payable at Michaelmas each year: Lord Monson paid 21/- for himself and his family, to pass toll bars when riding on horseback. Many others subsequently made arrangements to compound payment. The tolls were to be charged as follows:

For every horse, bullock etc. drawing any vehicle
3d

For every horse etc., not drawing
1 ½d

Every drove of oxen, cows or meat cattle
10d per score

Every drove of calves, hogs, sheep or lambs
5d per score

A reduced rate of 2d per vehicle was charged for vehicles with wheels whose rims were over nine inches wide. This was a common measure adopted at the time to discourage vehicles which made ruts in the loose surface (see Jackman's 'Development of Transportation in Modern England').

In Brigg the road eastward out of the town was widened to forty feet, as can easily be seen today, and for this purpose land was purchased at 1 ½d per square yard. In November 1765 it was decided to erect milestones between Riseholme and Barton Waterside [i.e. the route from Lincoln to Barton].

On 5th February 1766 the Trustees, meeting at the White Lyon in Brigg, paid the Rev. Carter for his quickly-completed section, and ordered that 'The thanks of the Trustees be given to the said Mr Carter for the Patriotic Zeal which he has exerted in the service of the country upon this occasion'. Payments to other contractors for their completed sections followed during the next few months. Further contracts were also issued to Edward Weston, acting under the surveyor, for the continuation of the Caistor road from Bigby through Somersby and Sear by, and a Mr Whichcot was to 'carry on in a straight line' the road westward from the main Brigg –Lincoln route at Spital, through Blyborough Lodge towards Gainsborough.

The first case of refusal to pay tolls came on 9th November 1765, when Matthew Maw of Bigby insisted on sending his beasts and sheep through the toll bar at New Bridge without payment, an offence which he repeated on 19th March 1766. A meeting of the Trustees on 2nd April 1766 demanded an explanation, which must presumably have been satisfactory, for we find in January 1767 that the same Mr Maw had taken over Alexander Thompson's contracts for the section of road near Bigby.

By May 1766 the site for the remaining sections of road east of Brigg, including Clixby to Caistor, were fixed. It was reported that occupiers in Kettleby had refused to perform statue work on the turnpike; the surveyor was to notify the Justices of the Peace if it was not carried out. Further land was to be acquired for widening in various places.

Later years of the Trust

My detailed work on the minutes of the Trustees ended with the year 1767, but a glance at some later minutes and other material gives some idea as to how the Trust continued.

In 1782 the task of surveyor was divided, Mr Bradley, the existing surveyor, being responsible for the Spital to Barton and Brigg to Melton sections only, John Ferriby being appointed for the Brigg to Caistor section. The letting of the tolls in 1782 was to be advertised, presumably an annual practice. In 1823 it was found that the bars at Barton and Riseholme produced rents of about £200 per year, the remaining gates some £500 to £600.

The first Act was renewed after twenty-one years (26 Geo III) and in 40 Geo III. Powers were adopted to shut off part of the ancient 'middle road' north of Lincoln which was being used by travellers to avoid the Riseholme Bar.

The year 1822 found the turnpike in a poor state of repair. After representations from the Postmaster General and carriage owners it was decided to obtain a surveyor who was familiar with "McAdam's principles". Accordingly, John Ferraby (who may or may not have been the same 'John Ferriby' appointed in 1782) was replaced by Thomas Wilks. The latter, however, was the subject of complaints for not attending his duties during the following year, and in December 1824 John Ferraby was one of seven new Trustees appointed to replace those dead or disqualified. A new surveyor was appointed in 1826, followed by a succession of six more in the period ending in 1870.

Despite the poor state of the road, the Trustees appear to have been very active at this time, with large numbers attending the meetings, under the chairmanship of C.D.Barnard. The clerk was then J.Nicholson, who received a salary of £30 per year. In November 1822 it was decided to pay off the existing debt of £5,220. Acting magistrates in the area were to fix the proportion of composition and statue labour from each parish. In August 1823 local parish surveyors contracted to repair their sections of road; new mileposts of oak and cast iron were erected between Barton and Lincoln in that year.

The Brigg Turnpike Trust finally ceased to function around 1880. A graph reproduced in 'Lincolnshire in the 17th and 18th centuries' by C.D.Brears (Brown, Hull, 1940) shows that revenue reached a peak of £2,200 in 1848. This was the year when the first railways in North Lincs opened for business. Thereafter revenue stabilised around £1,600 per

year until c1870, when it began to fall steeply. The latter date probably represents the start of ending of toll-collections rather than further impacts of the railways. This pattern of activity could be seen as fairly typical of turnpike roads: Wright (op cit, page 36) shows that turnpike mileage in Lincolnshire peaked at about 500 miles around, but the experienced rapid decline to complete cessation in the period 1850 – 1880. Dyos and Aldcroft (British Transport: An economic survey from the seventeenth century to the twentieth, Leicester University Press 1969, page 224) confirm a similar picture nationally, with the last Trust ceasing in 1895, responsibility for the roads being transferred to local authorities.

The most important public passenger service to use the turnpike was the coach from London to Barton Waterside via Lincoln. In 1723 the through journey took four days but only 28 hours by 1812, mainly as result of the turnpikes being constructed.

Today, most sections of the Brigg turnpike exist as main roads – the A15 (Lincoln – Elsham), the A18 (Brigg – Melton Ross), and A1084 (Brigg - Caistor). From a point just south of Redbourn the present A15 and the former turnpike is on the site of the Roman Ermine Street, apart from the deviation around RAF Scampton. By 1812 the Market Rasen – Spital – Gainsborough route was already classified as a 'cross road' (today the A631), and another turnpike led from Brigg through Normanby to Burton upon Stather (the area in which Scunthorpe now lies).

Until the 1980s the most heavily-used section of the former turnpike would have been the A18 through Melton Ross - however, most heavy and through traffic has been diverted onto the M180/A180. The original main road from Lincoln to Barton has grown in importance following the opening of the Humber Bridge in 1981.

(This article first appeared in 'Lincolnshire Industrial Archaeology' January 1970)

Book Review

THE TOLL-HOUSES CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Patrick Taylor

Polystar Press, 277 Cavendish St, Ipswich, IP3 8BQ

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80 pages, illustrated £7.95

This is the seventh volume of the series to appear and the well-established format of previous books is followed. The scope is present day Cambridgeshire, so that the traditional counties of Huntingdonshire the Isle of Ely and the Soke of Peterborough are also included.

Most of the book comprises a gazetteer listing all known toll-houses, whether extant or not, and includes a photograph of each of those still remaining. The earlier chapters comprise a summary of turnpike trust legislation, details of the turnpike trusts in the county and an explanation of "local distinctiveness" whereby geology influences building materials which in turn influenced the style of the toll-houses.

Photographs and the general standard of production of the book are quite up to the standard of previous volumes and we shall look forward to future offerings - we understand that a Somerset volume is currently being written.

Peter Jaques

Next Meeting

Saturday 24 March 2012

Coventry Transport Museum

1100 Annual General Meeting and
Business Meeting

Followed by talks from:

Dave Bubier "The last Stagecoach"

Peter White 'Origins of early bus
operators in Lincolnshire'

Martin Higginson 'Work on the Road
Passenger Companion'

Wartime Travel in Swansea

Robert McCloy

Introduction

The bus, momentarily, was as indispensable in Swansea, as the camel had been in the Arabian desert. The hypothesis considered is that the mundane bus and council, with government direction, played a decisive part in Swansea's war.

The study is mainly based on primary sources: Ministry of Transport wartime files, Swansea Town Clerk's 'A' files, diaries, and the surviving manuscript minute book of the Swansea Area Transport Advisory Committee.

Unlike other major urban areas in South Wales, Swansea has never had its own municipal bus operation. By the late 1930s, the dominant operator in the area was South Wales Transport (SWT). Although Swansea council was not a bus operator, an Act of 1936 had nonetheless provided an instrument of joint supervision of SWT that proved to be effective.¹ SWT operated within and beyond the statutory transport area, largely coterminous with the county borough, though Swansea was its operational hub and much of its extra-district services terminated in the town. The number of passengers carried in 322 vehicles had risen from twenty-three million in 1937 to forty-six million in 1939.²

The town was also served by the recently-established United Welsh Services Ltd. [UWS], approximately half SWT's size, and a subsidiary of the Red and White group; and, on a smaller scale, by James and Sons [Ammanford] Ltd., Neath and Cardiff Luxury Coaches Ltd. [N and C], West Wales Motors Ltd., Rees and Williams Ltd., Swan Motors Ltd and the Swansea Motors Ltd. Red and White Motors Ltd itself and Black and White Motorways Ltd. ran services to Swansea. Overall, SWT provided local services whilst it and others provided longer distance SWT and services, though these latter were dominated by UWS. A map from the 1967 SWT timetable (on page 14) indicates the area described in this paper.

Kenneth O. Morgan describes Percy Morris, council leader, as Swansea's new champion.³ In what follows, Morris comes over as moral, but

politically pragmatic. Chief officers shaped what was accomplished. Lang-Coath, town clerk, had handled the negotiations over the 1936 Act⁴ which established the transport area, and duly took a vigorous part as ARP Controller, and in the Advisory Committee, the creature of the Act. At the war's declaration, Swansea had already done much by way of preparation, including anti-gas training for police, firemen and council staff.⁵

Under Defence Regulations, the Minister of Transport assumed significant powers over road passenger transport exercised nationally, through an interventionist directorate, whose correspondence was undertaken by C.A.Birtchnell, and locally, through a South Wales regional traffic commissioner, A.T.James. Typical of Birtchnell's imperturbability was guidance on the need for uniformity in setting fares, notwithstanding the imminence of invasion.⁶ A national advisory committee was established whose membership included Ernest Bevin, general secretary, Transport and General Workers' Union, and, later Minister of Labour – in both roles affecting transport in south Wales – and S.E.Garcke, representing the commercial road passenger industry. The latter had reorganized the South Wales Transport Company Limited [SWT], been its chairman, and was a founder of the Swansea Advisory Committee.⁷ In November, 1939, the national committee met when Bevin and Garcke expressed, a common concern: Garcke that the fuel allocations, the instrument by which major economy was made immediately, not discriminating between types of service, were almost exclusively consumed by bus services to the exclusion of excursions; Bevin that fuel for excursions be allocated 'to provide facilities for, say, the miners in the villages to get out of their villages.'⁸

During the war it proved unnecessary to purchase utility vehicles and only one bus body was destroyed. Twenty-eight buses were impressed for military use¹

The Advisory Committee met in August, 1939 under the chairmanship of Garcke. SWT was additionally represented by Blake, managing director and another BET director [SWT was a BET subsidiary], with the traffic superintendent; whilst the council was represented by Morris and two councillors with Lang-Coath, and Watkins, his deputy. References to the war were oblique: difficulties over economies of operation. Reports were sought and the financial statement for 1938 discussed.⁹ UWS's preoccupation in 1939 was its new coach station, the upper floor of which was offered to the council for ARP use.¹⁰ Such, then, were the *dramatis personae* and something of their immediate concerns on the eve of war. Here was *sang-froid*, albeit fuel and other economies were already impacting and the threat of invasion was real enough.

The initial effects of the War

A lull of sorts now occurred: there was no immediate attack. Measures taken in anticipation of air raids were extensive. The council leased part of SWT's Ravenhill garage as an auxiliary fire station, and eleven other properties, including SWT's former tram depot, for shelters.¹¹ Car parking adjacent to hospitals was stopped.¹² However, there was now anger: 'More killed by black-out than by guns' trumpeted *The South Wales Evening Post* in January, 1940. Conductors complained of passengers tendering farthings for sixpences in the reduced lighting. Passengers resorted to stepping out in unfamiliar places to stop buses. Drivers lost their way. Passengers, increasing in numbers because of war work, contended with reduced services and greater crowding.¹³

Meanwhile, the Ministry's Birtchnell was concerned that evacuees' relatives were visiting reception areas and using 'unauthorized' operators. James was to stop the latter and prevent evacuees returning home.¹⁴ Surrealistically, in February, consideration was given to where holiday traffic congestion might occur. With the acceleration of the building of arms factories, work staggering was promoted. Conferences would be arranged to survey travelling facilities.¹⁵ Commissioners had

not been alerted earlier about factory location and it was not until 26 July, 1940 that commissioners were advised that agreement had been reached with the Ministries of Supply and Aircraft Production as to the formal arrangements for consultation. James had not waited and was chided: discussions with factories must not compromise the participation of railway representatives in formal meetings and the utilization, whenever possible, of the railway and the use of road transport only when trains, dependent upon local fuel, was impracticable,¹⁶ A grim possibility, was that people would flee areas exposed to attack. Their return home would have to be arranged.¹⁷

The March meeting of the Advisory Committee witnessed Garcke's resignation.¹⁸ References to war were again discreet. Council representatives sought minor service improvement but accepted that this would not now be possible, undertook to enquire whether the council could contribute to the cost of improved bus stop signs, and obtained agreement that James be asked to relax the definition of workmen.¹⁹

Meanwhile, Whitehall was promoting the adaptation of buses for gas propulsion.²⁰ James was advised that 'in general a garage must not be reserved... if it is normally used mainly for the garaging and/or maintenance of... public service vehicles', and requisitioning of garages, in excess of 1,250 square feet, within five miles of Swansea should be avoided if possible.²¹ Espionage had to be considered: James was notified on 14 June that bus signs were to make no references to military establishments. The pace was quickening: operational economies were being made but military and arms production were making more demands upon operators, whilst beginning to recruit from their labour pool. Conductresses were now being employed for rural areas, it being hoped that it would remain possible to recruit sufficient men in urban areas.²²

Frontline Town: 1940

The borough engineer now outlined with *bravado* a programme of post-war town road building in January.²³ By late June, nevertheless, Swansea and James had cause enough to appreciate the air raid precautions. With the June capitulation of France, Swansea was within bombing range of captured airfields.

In contemporaneous accounts, it is possible to see, amidst the debris and smoke, the ubiquitous bus

largely taken for granted. In notes for a later study, R.M.Davies recorded:

'...our fears were realized. June 26 at 01.08 the first yellow colour was.... reported. The white was received at 02.13...' On 28 June the first bomb was dropped on 35 Danycraig Road causing slight damage...' For Davies, Swansea was now 'a front line town'. His notes, which cover the period to 18 August, 1940, record the pattern of alerts, attacks, damage and casualties, methodical and effective responses from the ARP and relatively few casualties, but no reference to any overwhelming destruction of heavy industry or transport communications. W. Thomas, an air raid warden, offers a complementary picture: ' August 27, 1940: Coming home from Pennard in Bus warning was rec'd when we arrived at Mayals, 8.50 p.m., asked if we wanted to get out or go on, decided to carry on. When we arrived at Mumbles, stopped by soldier for inspection of identity cards, arrived in town about 9.10, walked home, warning [indistinct] all clear 11.50 p.m., no event occurred 2nd warning. 12.30 a.m. All clear 1.50 a.m. Bombs dropped & firing 3rd warning 2.40 a.m. All clear 3.15 a.m. Gerry brought down at...' ²⁴

The siren's silence concerned the council who pursued matters with Whitehall, ²⁵ despatching a delegation thence on 29 August. The meeting amicably concluded: more sirens were to be sounded, attention would be given to Swansea in reducing the time lag before the siren's sounding, but a public statement 'would be most unwise'. ²⁶ More sirens, however, could compromise essential production. Churchill intervened: 'Experience...has taught us that one of our greatest problems... is to maintain our production in spite of air raids...' The transport ministry issued guidance for public service transport: '...to continue to carry passengers desiring to travel after the sirens have sounded, until there are definite indications that an actual attack in the vicinity is likely to take place...' ²⁷ Locally, 'difficulties were being experienced with staff during air raid warnings prompting UWS and SWT to adopt a common policy. By late November UWS's services were operating 'very satisfactorily'. ²⁸

Thomas' diary offers a subsequent snapshot: ' Oct 9. Warning 7.00 pm. All clear 8.50 pm....came home by bus, arr. at Margaret St. and heavy AA firing commenced at 9.20 pm. No warning given. Incendiary bombs had been dropped...Explosive bombs in some parts...Oct 20. Warning 7.25 am AA gunfiring, twice Mia, Em and I down on road waiting bus, one passed full up then warning came. All clear 9.25 pm 2nd warning 11.20 pm heavy

firing. All clear 1.55 am...' ²⁹ The year had offered stark warning of worst to come.

1941: destructive climax

A new ferocity in the aerial attacks marked the beginning of 1941. Lang-Coath presented a dispassionate report of the raid of 17 and 18 January, 1941 to the Ministry of Home Security: '...After the successful extinguishing of the earlier fires. Industry, offices, commercial premises, homes, schools, chapels, and public buildings were damaged and there were fifty-one fatalities...An unexploded bomb necessitated the evacuation of the Wind Street main post office. Nineteen roads were damaged with some stopped to traffic. Gas mains and water mains were damaged as were electricity cables...'

On the occasion of the 'Three Nights' Blitz, Lang-Coath, criticised for not convening the emergency committee and the catering arrangements, reported in fuller terms to the ARP committee, and, at their prompting, to council. The verbatim version survives: it was a *tour de force*. It cited the operation's success, plaudits from the ministries, officers' tireless efforts, the impracticability and irrelevance of convening a committee, the author's constitutional duty to act, and, throwing down the gauntlet [not picked up !], his willingness to remain Controller, an unpaid post, if it were the council's wish. The report to council, notably, referred to the much praised speedy reestablishment of the market in the UWS bus station. ³⁰

The Mass Observation report, quoted by Alban, in *The Three Nights' Blitz*, ³¹ noted that the public utilities, including transport, were interfered with seriously in the bombed area but that these gradually came back during the next few days. 'Out of town 'buses were coming as far into town as they could, but there were no in-town 'buses running, and the service was quite inadequate although extra 'buses had been pressed into service. A 'bus inspector said there was nothing for the 'buses to come in for, and that the only people using them were sightseers, but this is probably an exaggeration.' Pre-war abandonment of trams meant that the replacing buses would have been able to make more easily detours around obstructions. ³²

Many evacuated: '... setting out on Thursday evening to catch a bus to Ystradgynlais ... I was fortunate in finding room on a bus but many people were left behind, including my parents. That night the German bombers returned ... and I recall standing, on the village square... and seeing the glow in the sky over Swansea, waiting and

hoping my parents would arrive on a later bus, however, this was not to be. The following morning I journeyed home, not knowing what I was to find, thankfully, my family were safe, but the whole town had been devastated.³³

Other diaries and recollections help to offer a reconstruction of events, including casual references to transport taken for granted. An ARP warden had noted, alluding to results of an earlier attack: '...So widespread was the damage, business was brought almost to a standstill...barricades up made alterations and curtailments of bus services on many routes...Later, he reported: '...fire bomb fell on a stationary bus in Castle St., which was burnt out, the bus was empty and flames from it damaged the business premises of Long [jeweller] and Moriarty...'³⁴ An anonymous diary by a member of the Home Guard largely consisting of weather reports, domestic detail, visits to friends and shopping, highlights shipping, American troops, the air raids and, of particular interest, local transport: ' 1 August, 1941: Burning heat, searchlights busy to the West...travel through with Tom at 2.p.m. but buses packed...31 August: Dull and very wet in Swansea. Bus to Brecon with Basil...1 October: Brilliant clear cool day. Bus to Llangennith, walked on downs to Rhossilly...17 December: Cloudy moonlight at night after some rain. A few salvos from the Battery at night. Season tickets stopped. 16 December: ...ARP man said Hospital was being evacuated piles of buses etc. in Phillips Parade...'³⁵

A further anonymous notebook, contains a vivid account of the town centre devastation: on 22 February: 'people were streaming out of town in thousands' whilst on 26 February the bus to the office terminated at Page Street necessitating a walk to complete the journey.³⁶ A recollection recorded in 1991 included the observation: 'We hurried to the bus station and... suddenly, a basket of incendiary bombs fell right in front of us. They burst into flames and rolled under one of the buses. The bus driver ran forward and moved the bus while others threw sand bags on the bombs, which by now were burning fiercely. Women and children were screaming and bundled into a room under the stairs...'³⁷

Further glimpses are set out in the *South Wales Evening Post's* sixtieth anniversary publication of the 'Three Nights Blitz'.³⁸ P.Watkins wrote: '...It was...the last night of the blitz...We were told to finish work and go home...We ran... to the Central Hall where we normally caught our bus to Clydach. Everything seemed to be happening in the sky... soldiers grabbed us and demanded, "Where

do you think you are going ?" We explained that we were hoping for a bus to take us home. The soldiers gently broke the news that there were no buses running owing to the chaos of the bombing...Luckily, in about 10 minutes a bus arrived [it must have been the last "Valley Bus" out of Swansea] and we were unceremoniously bundled onto it, I was terrified and kept my head in my hands. Going through the Hafod my friend begged of me "You must look at Kilvey Hill-it is like a Christmas tree! You have never seen anything like this before"...We got home escorted out of Swansea by flares and incendiaries on both sides of the road...We went to work the following morning but the bus was stopped at the top of High Street and a policeman asked us where we were going. We replied, "To work in John Roberts". His reply stunned us-"There is no John Roberts anymore, it is just a mass of rubble"...'

E.M.Wedlake recalled 'I was 15 at the time and you should have seen us trying to walk down Penycraig Road and Mount Pleasant laden with bags and everything else that we could carry on our way to the bus station in order to catch a bus into the country...' R.E.Roberts reported that packed trains and buses and the blackout 'were a bugbear'; whilst T.G.Bowen recalled that, while during his training in the Welch Regiment in Cardiff hearing that 'Swansea had been blown off the face of the earth', he obtained a seventy-two hour pass and immediately caught the N and C coach 'but it only dropped us as far as Landore...' G.Brown remembered that Mount Pleasant had been sealed from traffic, the Townhill buses being obliged to go via Carmarthen Road and Gors Avenue. D.R.Henning was so worried about his family that '... I travelled by bus to Swansea after the second night of bombing...stayed the night with the family...On the morning of February 21, I had to return to Glyncoerrwg. I set out on foot from Tycoch to Christina Street, intending to catch the '42' bus. After countless diversions because of closed streets due to fire, unexploded bombs and burst pipes, I reached Christina Street to find the bus stop had been moved to somewhere near the Palace Theatre...I eventually found a bus and reached Glyncoerrwg six hours later...' D. Walsh recounted that he would get a bus from Port Tenant into town to go home: 'As we were passing Weavers the sirens started wailing. The bus pulled into the terminus ... and we made our different ways ...'

The above incidents, and accounts of others examined including the Latchford diaries³⁹ [thirty-eight in total], cumulatively complementing the formal reports, demonstrate the commonplace nature of the bus in



The only companies of independent nature during WW2 in Swansea were The Swan Motor Co. and Swansea Bus Services who operated as one concern.

SBS was started in 1933 by Mr Kennard, a former SWT Inspector in 1933 and combined it with Swan two years later. The buses were painted in an unusual

scheme of cream & brown. Swan finally sold out to United Welsh Services in 1952, and in effect were nationalised. With a different policy to SWT they purchased a number of wartime buses on Daimler chassis, as illustrated above. Daimler and AEC buses were also bought in the post-war years. [J.F.Higham]

Right is an example of the pre-war standard of the 'Swan'. The AEC Regents had Park Royal bodywork. Note the 'Swan' sign above the destination box. There were plenty of places post-war for parking cars and buses due to the clearance of bombed buildings. [J.F. Higham]



United Welsh Services was formed in 1938, by the Red & White Group of Chepstow, to take over the

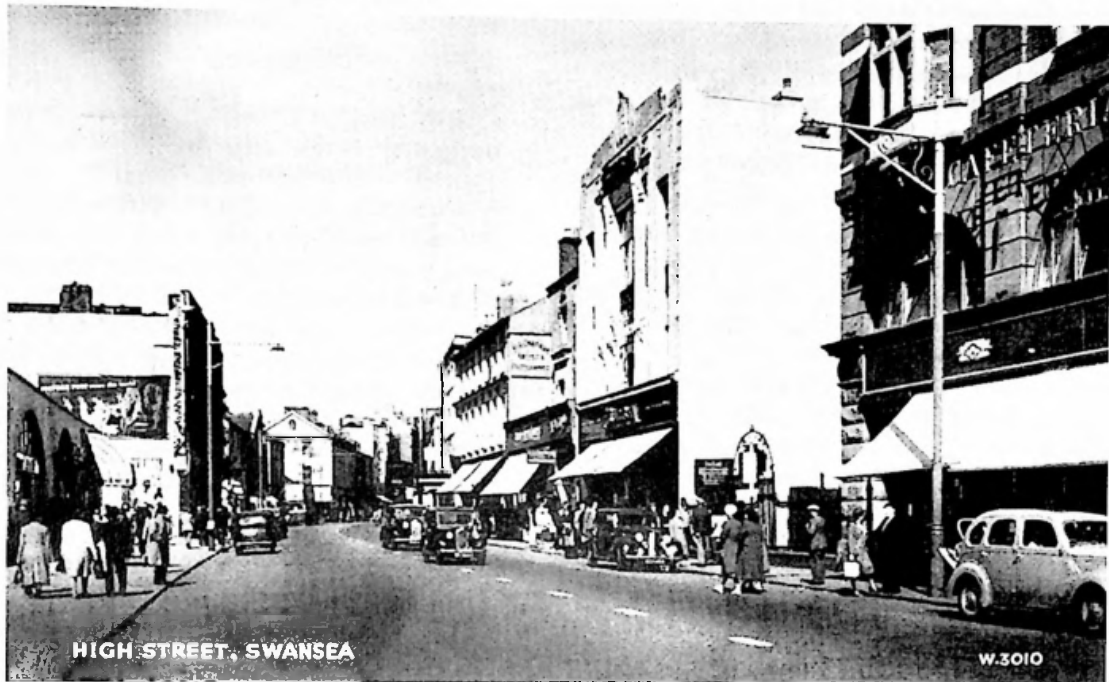
small fleets of bus & coach operators that had been purchased in the 1930's and to combine them into one unit. Red & White had an agreement with GWR and Western Welsh not to take over companies that competed with them and *vice versa*. This was the reason why R&W took over the small Swansea firms in the west and Cheltenham & District etc. in the east. The photograph shows a wartime Guy Arab fitted with a Strachan highbridge body. It



is in Tilling red and cream with Tilling name transfers. As the Monmouthshire registration would indicate, it once belonged to R&W. Many transfers took place during WW2 that had to be sorted out when hostilities ceased. The fleet livery began as two-tone blue but changed to the red and white of the parent company at the end of the war.

[A.M. Wright]

Swansea endured the worst air raids of any South Wales city with over forty attacks between 1940 and 1943 causing great damage to the city centre. In the distance at High Street (below) can be seen one of the AEC Regent oil-engined buses that replaced the electric trams in 1937. These buses were part of the Swansea scene for twenty years.



Right: A view of Castle Gardens in Swansea in the 1950's with three SWT AEC double deck buses, two post-war and one pre-war, all in a bright red with a single cream band. The area around Swansea Castle has since changed greatly.



Left: Castle Street, Swansea shown in the years leading up to WW2. One of the 1937 tram replacement buses can be seen. Its livery would later change from two cream bands to one. This scene was to change dramatically during the war when much of the street was obliterated by the *Luftwaffe* bomb

extraordinary circumstances: being blocked from completing journeys to termini, operating during and after raids, often passing stops because they were full, providing both for those fleeing and seeking respite, and, occasionally, being bombed. The provision of essential services, for war work and some recreation, alongside stringent fuel economy, was challenging. The general public was urged to finish travelling by 4 p.m. to provide space for essential workers and an advertisement to this effect was published in *The South Wales Evening Post* on 18 February, 1941.

Operators had been quick to press the case for the useful employment of the many now idle vehicles and staff brought about by the reduction of fuel supplies. Vehicles had been requisitioned to be used as ambulances and ARP work. In the case of SWT, approximately twenty-six vehicles were impressed.⁴⁰ Operators claimed that surplus vehicles should be used for troop movements, ambulances, ARP work, and replacing disrupted trains. The Ministry was unmoved: economy was essential and, in any case, other services now had sufficient transport.⁴¹ There is no indication in Lang-Coath's reports or the ministerial records examined that it had been necessary to supplement the ambulance and ARP fleets with locally-hired passenger service vehicles. The buses parked adjacent to Swansea hospital at the time of its evacuation, cited in the diary above, may have been there as a result of the Ministry's dispersal policy.

The 1941 major blitz and attacks on other towns were quickly analysed: there were lessons to be shared.⁴² Additional deputy regional commissioners were needed and, as a result, Morris was appointed to this role for South Wales on 11 August, 1941⁴³ The reforms included guidance and assistance to councils following a blitz, enabling neighbouring councils to lend officers to each other, establishing Ministry of Health mobile aid teams, speeding up evacuation schemes, expansion of the rest centre service, ensuring priority for essential workers, appointing where necessary billeting officers, and, of particular relevance, ensuring proper consideration of transport needs. The new arrangements specifically made Swansea, along with Cardiff and Barrow, evacuation areas – in addition to Plymouth.

Overall, the local transport scene during 1941 had undergone a significant metamorphosis, effected by blitz and ministerial circular. The latter had included direction and guidance on staggering,⁴⁴ shopping and recreational hours, bus shelters and queuing,⁴⁵ school hours,⁴⁶ mutual aid schemes,⁴⁷

and a central transport committee scheme.⁴⁸ The annual number of passengers carried by SWT had risen from forty-eight million in 1940 to fifty million in 1941.⁴⁹ Barricades had necessitated detours but the bus continued to operate and carried more passengers.

1942: Swansea's year of maximum mobility

1942 witnessed further restrictions on fuel and rubber supply, with Japanese advances in the Far East. The threat of aerial attack and invasion, however, moderated. Dispersal of vehicles, when not in use, to minimise comprehensive destruction, was relaxed.⁵⁰ The former tram depot was now leased to British Oxygen Co. Ltd.⁵¹ Other issues, however, remained matters of ministerial concern: more vehicles should be converted to carry more standing passengers, by order if absolutely necessary;⁵² and the transport operators' associations' urgings that workers fares be abolished were not to be accommodated.⁵³

The Mines Department clarified the question of colliery services fares: they would not contribute to fares formerly agreed voluntarily, would consider taking responsibility where fares exceeding a 1 January standard, would not normally meet extra fares necessitated by new seam opening, new colliery services should normally be self-supporting except where fares, again, were substantially in excess of 1 January, 1941 standard.⁵⁴

Swansea's ARP undertook further training assuming a bombing scenario preparatory to invasion, oddly excluding any participation of passenger transport operators.⁵⁵ Criticism of transport resulted in a conference of Glamorgan councils, held in Neath, which, with the support of the Welsh parliamentary party, obtained improvements: councils would be consulted on major service alterations, twelve journey weekly tickets would be made available 'where hardship would result e.g., shop girls whose wages were notoriously small...', and workmen engaged in vital war work, unable to board full buses would be aided, with union support, by the Ministry of Labour's welfare officer. However, local government staff were denied priority tickets. The conference determined to reconvene in January, 1943.⁵⁶ The episode illustrated local government's capacity to represent public concern, obtain some relaxation without compromising economy.

Many in Swansea had pressed their concerns prompting an examination of matters by the Advisory Committee. Lang-Coath listed the complaints for the Committee⁵⁷ which had not met earlier – no meeting had taken place in 1941. Lang-Coath duly reported to council that the Committee considered that the essential fuel reduction inevitably would create problems, the full fuel ration was being used, the traffic now necessary for Port Tenant [twenty per cent higher than pre-war] could only be met by an off peak reduction, in instances such as Dunvant and Killay greater use of the railway should be made, the dependency of Ynystawe on long distance services invariably full was unacceptable and that a further attempt would be made to extend the Morryston service. A diversion of the Banwen service to serve Lonlas, and a restrictive fare on the Blackpill service to deter Sketty passengers, would be sought. The general complaint that passengers were unable to board buses because they were already full had been much exaggerated. On these matters, the council and company members of the Advisory Committee were at one.

However, there was an initiative [to which the company would not be party] open to the council: application could be made to remove the restriction preventing other operators from picking up passengers within the borough *en route* for the town centre. The council accepted this counsel.⁵⁸ A public hearing took place on 18 December, 1942, into the Ynystawe application, the company and council making the case, representatives of James and Sons Ltd. and UWS, contesting. The hearing concluded that this was not an exceptional case: if 'a large body of people engaged in essential work' were being denied space duplicate provision 'by some company' could be considered.⁵⁹ The curtailment of season tickets had prompted representations from the director of education: in a time of staff shortage the clerical work would be doubled.⁶⁰ Though further economies had been made and dissatisfaction was mounting, yet more passengers were being carried by SWT: the annual total had risen from fifty million in 1941 to fifty-seven million for 1942.⁶¹

1943: a year of increasing agitation

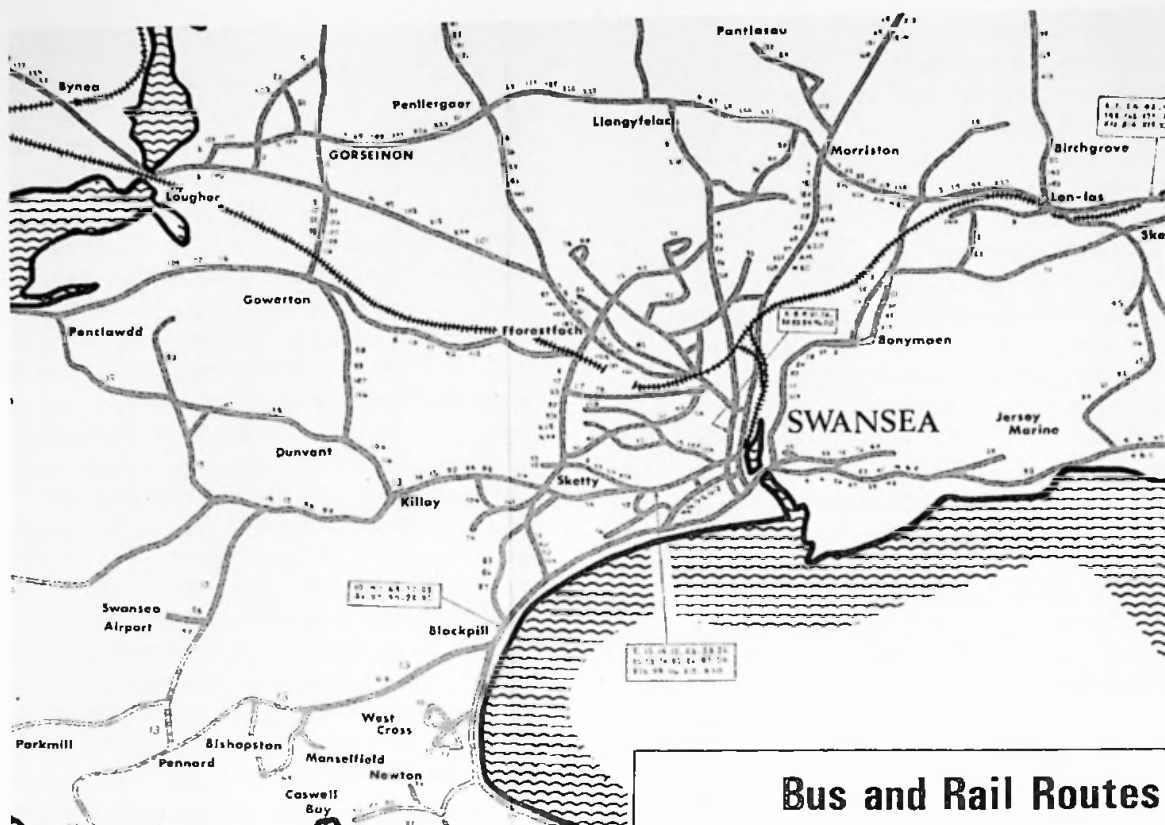
Turner, the chief constable, listed for the town clerk long distance services subject to restrictions on picking up passengers. In addition to those which were to have the restrictions lifted this included the Red and White and N and C routes from Cardiff.⁶²

The parliamentary committee sought the Home Office's consent to the installation of restricted lighting at bus stops, at their 12 January meeting. The Neath conference's sub committee duly reconvened on 14 January, 1943. Broadly, the atmosphere was positive, representatives reporting some improvements.⁶³

In March, there was news of progress: the commissioner, now Trevor Morgan, had refused the extension to Ynystawe, but had approved the diversion of the Banwen service, and the introduction of minimum fares between the town centre and Sketty on the Blackpill service.⁶⁴ Significantly, Morgan lifted the restriction on incoming long distance services from picking up passengers in the borough. This major relief affected the services of UWS from Resolven, Neath and Carmarthen, and those of Rees and Williams Ltd. and West Wales Motors Ltd., from, respectively, Llandeilo and Llandovery. The council was grateful. Morgan, had also announced in March the withdrawal of the restrictions on the issue of season tickets with effect from 5 April because of 'unexpectedly good weather and other conditions' although conservation of fuel and rubber remained crucial.⁶⁵

The fragility of conditions had been brought home on 16 February by Swansea's last air raid which though shocking was not particularly effective. W.J.Fennell, working the afternoon shift as a GWR fireman at Danygraig, caught the bus to Swansea bus station and began walking home to Brynmill. The siren sounded and a bomb exploded ahead, as he walked along St. Helens Road, causing devastation in the hospital's vicinity⁶⁶ The official report recorded forty-three ambulance journeys, whilst the cars available 'was sufficient to meet requirements of first aid parties', undertaking about eighty journeys. As a pointer to traffic dislocation, six classified and ten unclassified roads, nine sewers, seven gas mains, three water mains and various electricity lines were damaged. The report laconically noted that there had been 'some inconvenience for shoppers'.⁶⁷

(to be concluded in the next issue).



Bus and Rail Routes

Above: Bus and rail routes in the Swansea area in 1967 (approx scale 1 cm= 1.3km)

¹ On the termination of the statutory arrangements, the council having decided not to purchase the undertaking within the transport area, a non-statutory advisory committee, at the prompting of the company, continued to operate. W.T.Mainwaring-Hughes, an independent councillor who had served as chairman, wrote in supportive terms and observed that United Welsh Services Ltd. were later also to be represented, WGAS., LOC/SWA, *Kicks and Kudos: Candid Recollections of forty years as a councillor*, p.39.

² South Wales Transport Company Limited, *50 Years of Public Service*, [Swansea, 1964], p. 18.

³ K.O. Morgan, 'The challenge of democracy', in R.A.Griffiths [ed.], *The City of Swansea: Challenges and Change* [Stroud, 1990], pp. 60-1.

⁴ T.Mainwaring-Hughes, *Kicks and Kudos: Candid Recollections of Forty Years as a Councillor*, [Swansea, ND], p.35.

⁵ J.R.Alban, *The Three Nights' Blitz* [Swansea, 1994], p.22.

⁶ London, [T]he [N]ational [A]rchives], MT 55/5 [1939], *Public Service Vehicles Fares*, Ministry of Transport letter to regional traffic commissioners, 30 December, 1939.

⁷ The Swansea and District Transport Act, 1936, Ch. xxxix 26 Geo.5. & 1 Edw. 8., made provision for an advisory committee consisting of an equal number of representatives of the council and SWT. The act specified that the committee was to advise on service provision and fares in the transport area. Clause 7[4] of the agreement specified 'It shall be the duty of the committee from time to time to consider and make proposals/recommendations to the Transport Company or the Tramways Company with regard to the operation and development of road passenger transport services within the Transport area including the fares payable on such services.' The fifth schedule included a mutual obligation of aid in seeking service authorization from commissioners, and 'in respect of 1943 and each subsequent year until and including the year 1957 the Transport Company shall pay to the Corporation a sum equal to one quarter of the specified profits for that year calculated in manner hereafter provided or a sum of £5,000 whichever shall be the greater'.

⁸ TNA, MT 55/109, *Road Transport [Defence] Advisory Committee*, notes of meeting, 1 November, 1939.

- ⁹ Cardiff, [C]hris [T]aylor [A]rchive, private collection, *Swansea Advisory Committee Minute Book*, meeting, 16 August, 1939.
- ¹⁰ Droitwich. [K]ithead [T]rust [A]rchives *United Welsh Services Limited Directors' Meetings Minute Book 1939-1959*, 18 July, 1 August, 12 and 26 September, and 24 October, 1939, pp. 1-64.
- ¹¹ WGAS, TC3/60, ARP committee, 25 January and 25 July, 1940.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, Watch Committee, 29 December, 1940.
- ¹³ J.M.Morris, Morale under air attack: Swansea 1939-1941, in *Welsh History Review*, 11, Number 3 [1983], p. 363.
- ¹⁴ TNA, MT 55/5, ministry to regional traffic commissioners, 2 January, 1940; MT 55/4: the ministry had anticipated that commissioners would have needed to ensure that buses services were available for visiting parents between the railway stations and the billeting areas, 8 November, 1939.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, MT 55/6, 2 April, and MT 55/28, 26 May, 1940.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, MT 55/248, 17 April, 1940, and MT 55/9, 26 July, 1940.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, MT 55/6, 10 April, 1940, MT 55/8, 21 June, 1940, and MT 55/9 *Second Inter-Departmental Memorandum on Refugees from Air Attacks*.
- ¹⁸ Though Garcke's national responsibilities necessitated this resignation, he remained chairman of the Swansea and District Improvements and Tramways Committee, a BET company, which, with other interests, retained ownership of the buses purchased to replace the trams. As such, he remained closely involved with local transport matters.
- ¹⁹ CTA, *Advisory Committee*, 5 March, 1940.
- ²⁰ TNA., MT 55/109, *Directorate of Alternative Motor Fuels*, appendix to *Historical Survey*, contains the observation: '... There has been considerable reluctance – amounting almost to obstruction – on the part of operators to the fitting and use of producer gas units.' p. 2.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, MT 55/8, letter to regional traffic commissioners, 6 June, 1940.
- ²² CTA., *Red and White*, board minutes, 16 January, 1940.
- ²³ WGAS., TC3/60, highways committee, 4 January, 1940.
- ²⁴ WGAS., D/DZ 126/2, W. Thomas, *Air Raid Warden's Diary*.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, Dowding's reply, 20 August, 1940.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, *Note of a Deputation from the County Borough of Swansea received at the Ministry of Home Security on Thursday, 29 August, 1940*.
- ²⁷ TNA., MT 55/8, *Working After the Siren*, note and letters to Transport and General Workers Union and road passenger transport representative associations, 11 September, 1940.
- ²⁸ CTA., *Red and White Services*, board meetings: 1 October and 26 November, 1940.
- ²⁹ WGAS., D/DZ 126/2, *Diary*.
- ³⁰ WGAS., P/SM 95, *Official Report on the 'Three Nights' Blitz' by Mr Howell Lang-Coath, Air Raid Precautions Controller for Swansea, to the Council of the County Borough of Swansea, 16 March, 1941*, transcript of shorthand notes.
- ³¹ J.R.Alban, *The Three Nights' Blitz* [Swansea City Council, 1994], p. 165.
- ³² South Wales Transport, *Fifty Years of Public Service*, p.13.
- ³³ L.Thomas, in C. Davies [ed.], *It'll all be over by Christmas*, [Rhondda, 1991], p.41.
- ³⁴ WGAS., 0102 416/1, *Swansea Air Raid*, notebook, 1 and 24 September, 1940.
- ³⁵ WGAS., D/DZ 233/31, anonymous, notebook.
- ³⁶ WGAS., D/DZ 416/4., anonymous. small pocket notebook.
- ³⁷ L.James, in C.Davies [ed.] *It'll all be over by Christmas: A Collection of Wartime Memories* [Rhondda, 1991], p. 38.
- ³⁸ South Wales Evening Post, *Memories of Swansea at War* [Manchester, 1988].
- ³⁹ L.Latchford, *Civilian Diary*, WGAS, D 35/1-3.
- ⁴⁰ WGAS., DD GJM 3, R.F.A.Neale [ed.], *The Omnibus Society/The PSV Circle, South Wales Transport Company Ltd.: Fleet History PG 4*.
- ⁴¹ TNA., MT 55/4, *Enforced Idleness and other matters affecting Public Service Vehicles*, letter to regional traffic commissioners, 14 September, 1939.
- ⁴² TNA., MT 55/16, secret memorandum from ministry of transport with copy of ministry of health memoranda, R.O.A. 406, *Policy on Evacuation and Care of the Homeless*, to regional transport commissioners, 25 June, 1941.
- ⁴³ WGAS, D53/4/1.
- ⁴⁴ TNA., Ministry of Transport, circular 25/41, *Staggering of Working Hours*.
- ⁴⁵ TNA. Ministry of Transport, circulars 368/41, 402/41, 426/41, *Staggering, Shop Hours, Cinemas and Theatres, Bus Shelters and Queue Control*.
- ⁴⁶ TNA., Ministry of Transport, circular 108/41, *School Hours*.

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- ⁴⁷ TNA., Ministry of Transport, circular 8/41, *Mutual Aid Schemes*.
- ⁴⁸ TNA., Ministry of Transport, circular 447/41, *Central Transport Committee scheme*.
- ⁴⁹ South Wales Transport, *Fifty Years of Service*, p. 18.
- ⁵⁰ TNA, MT 55/28, memorandum to commissioners, 29 May, 1942.
- ⁵¹ Swansea, University of Wales, Swansea, Archives Service, MR C14, *Swansea Improvements and Tramways Company Ltd., minute Book 6*, 14 January, 1942.
- ⁵² TNA., MT 55/28, 28 May, 1942.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, letter to associations, 2 June, 1942.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, memorandum to commissioners, 2 June, 1942.
- ⁵⁵ WGAS, D. 42/9, *Civil Defence Combined Exercise 'Gower', 7/8, March, 1942*.
- ⁵⁶ WGAS., TC 54 A2058 and 1121 L., *Notes of Conference of Representatives of Local Authorities of Glamorgan Re Omnibus Services at The Gwyn Hall, Neath, Thursday, 16 July, 1942*, sub committee minutes, 20 August; 10, 22 September, summary of heads of complaint [additionally to those featured in the commissioner's reply, the list, prepared by the town clerk of Neath, had included: empty omnibuses returning from contracts not permitted to pick up passengers, parity in the treatment of miners and other workmen, better connection of services, the punitive effect on low income families of reducing long distance coach services, the need to discourage the general public from using buses for leisure and short distances, and stricter supervision of conductors.], 31, July 1942, and memorandum of town clerk to Swansea council, undated.
- ⁵⁷ *Swansea Advisory Committee Minute Book*, 26 August, 1942.
- ⁵⁸ WGAS., TC/54 A 1122L, *Swansea Area Transport Advisory Committee: Swansea Transport Services*, report to council, undated.
- ⁵⁹ WGAS., TC/54 A 2064, *Omnibus Services: Extension of Murryston Town Service to Ynystawe*, memorandum for council, 18 December, 1942.
- ⁶⁰ WGAS., TC/54 A 2054, letter to town clerk, 21 December, 1942.
- ⁶¹ South Wales Transport, *50 Years of Service*, p. 18.
- ⁶² WGAS., TC 54 A2058, Turner to town clerk, 7 January, 1943.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, *Omnibus Services*, minutes of meeting of conference of local authorities' sub committee, 14 January, 1943.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, letter to town clerk from South Wales Transport Company Ltd., 2 March, 1943.
- ⁶⁵ WGAS., TC/54 A2085, traffic commissioner's press release, 24 March, 1943.
- ⁶⁶ WGAS., D/DZ 379/1, R.T.Pearce, *Operation Wasservogel: The Swansea Raid*, [Beaminster, 1999], p. 107.
- ⁶⁷ TNA, HO 199/153, *Air Raid Report on Swansea*, 16 February, 1943.