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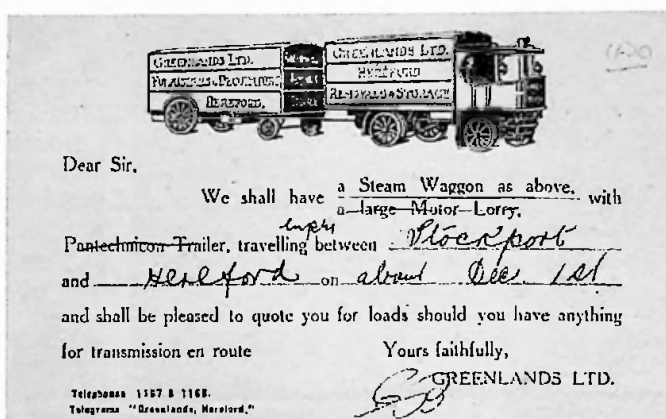
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A splendid front page item from Roy Larkin,

Please find attached a scan of a postcard which I think depicts a much better pace of life and doing business, than today and might be of some interest or at least amuse.

It is postmarked 21 November 1921 and was sent to J & B Blower, Pride Hill, Shrewsbury.

It is from Greenlands Ltd, High Town, Hereford who, according to the card, were Removal and Storage Contractors, Valuers, Auctioneers and Furnishers.

The mixed printed and manuscript text reads:

Dear Sir, We shall have a Steam Waggon, as above, travelling empty from Stockport to Hereford on about Dec 1st. and shall be pleased to quote you for loads should you have anything for transmission en route.

Yours faithfully,

The cost of postage was three half-pence, which, with the cost of printing the cards, could prove an expensive way of finding back loads, depending on how many cards were sent for each trip. I'd imagine that they were sent to regular customers/potential customers and also that Greenlands must have done regular long distance to warrant even the idea of using the cards. A Steam Waggon and a large Motor Lorry would also suggest quite a sizeable investment in 1921. The Sentinel as depicted cost £800 in 1924, and whilst I don't have a price for it in 1921, the Leyland steamer equivalent was £1200 in 1921 and the Foden equivalent was £1046 in 1922. A Dennis petrol lorry of equivalent size cost £960 and the AEC was £925, both in 1922, although both these would have been available cheaper as war surplus from Slough, or from the makers themselves as refurbished.

Note the date available as being 'on or about' Dec 1st. Far more leisurely than the current 'just in time so long as it is yesterday' pace of life.

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The Flying Busmen:

The road transport industry's contribution to the development of internal air services in the British Isles

JOHN HIBBS

The bus and coach industry in Britain was established with no great difficulty on an entrepreneurial basis, attracting investment and management skills from a wide range of sources, and expanding its market on a phenomenal scale in the decade after 1920. Internal air services, on the other hand, have had an uncertain history, marked by what appears to be a considerable difficulty in defining the market. The subject has been covered in several books and articles¹, but little seems to have been written about the attempts made by bus and coach operators to translate their commercial success to a third dimension.

The interest of busmen in air transport is a microcosm of the land-based industry, comprising individuals, small and large firms, and one of the major investment trusts of the inter-war period. The railways too were involved in the story, just as they were in running buses, and with — it would seem — a similar intention of protecting their own revenue. This article sets out to summarise the contributions of the bus operators and to investigate the possibility that their style of management might have had a useful contribution to make to the provision of internal air services in the British Isles.

The first busman to be associated with airline operation was that remarkable man Colonel Frank Searle. Searle's contribution to the motor bus industry — "the first really successful chief engineer of the London General Omnibus Company Ltd" — has been well documented², but he was more than a mechanical pioneer; in 1926 he became the first managing director of Imperial Airways.³ There are many references to his career in aviation⁴, but since it was more concerned with international operations, it will not be summarised here. It is sufficient to note two aspects of his professional approach that were to be typical of the contribution of the flying busmen.

One was his dislike of subsidy. Birkhead has recorded his remarks at a luncheon held in 1922 to celebrate Daimler's entry into aviation, saying that he "thought that the London to Paris service could be operated at a profit with the new subsidy and hoped to show, within a year, that it could be run entirely without subsidy"⁵. His subsequent failure to achieve his objective must be seen against the subsidies provided to his continental competitors by their governments. Birkhead also illustrates the second point, when he says that Searle "revolutionised the organisation of air transport, particularly by the intensity of his use of aircraft"⁶. This is a typical busman's attitude, and we shall see it again under other circumstances.

Searle's career lies outside the period with which this article is mainly concerned. Before we turn to the main argument, though, it is worth mentioning another, very different individual: Fred Wright of Louth (ob. 1966). Wright was a bus pioneer in East Lincolnshire, whose quite substantial business was acquired by the area company, Lincolnshire Road Car, in 1950. From private communications it appears that he turned his mind to aviation during the thirties, working from a field at Welton-le-Wold. He provided what would now be called air taxi services with

a biplane whose make has not been identified; and he is credited with possessing an example of the French mini-plane, called over here the 'Flying Flea' (although it seems doubtful whether it ever actually flew). Wright — and there may well have been others like him — does not appear to have regarded the aeroplane as being very different in principle to the motor vehicles with which he was already familiar.⁷

The road interest prior to nationalisation

The same attitude marks the contribution of several individuals who, through their companies, became directly involved in air services during the renaissance of commercial aviation in the 1930s. They will be discussed here in roughly chronological order, so as to maintain historical perspective. The first, who has been described as "probably the most significant figure in the re-emergence of private airlines in the United Kingdom in the early 1930s"⁸, Edward Hillman, who is properly described as the archetypal Flying Busman.



Hillman must inevitably be described as a rough diamond, and he attracted not a little obloquy from the establishment, both in road and air transport, before dying in 1934, a wealthy man, at the age of 35. From humble beginnings, and after an army career in the ranks, he set up a coach business in East London which rapidly achieved success on the basis of frequency and flexible operation. It was said that there was never a moment of the day when a Hillman 'Bluebird' coach was not to be seen on Brook Street Hill at Brentwood. Steadily pushing eastward, Hillman's coaches eventually ran from Bow to Norwich, Great Yarmouth and Clacton, carrying local passengers over every stage in addition to the traffic generally thought suitable only for long distance express services.

Foreseeing the inevitable acquisition of that part of his business that lay in the area of the future London Passenger Transport Board, Hillman had the audacious idea of serving his longer routes by air as well as by coach, and on 1 April 1932 he started a service with a De Havilland Puss Moth between Maylands, an airfield near Romford, and Clacton-on-Sea. This was successful, and although it was suspended after the summer, it was reinstated in 1933 and actually continued throughout the following winter. It is a mark of Hillman's lack of modal bias that he offered inter-availability of tickets between his air and coach services to and from Clacton.

On 1 April 1933 Hillman Airways started a non-subsidised service between Romford and Paris, and at one time Hillmans' day-return fare was less than a single on Air France. In the next year, a mail contract enabled a service to be started from Romford to Belfast, later extended to Glasgow, with through bookings to and from Paris.

Higham comments that Hillman “carried the war against the railways into the third dimension”;⁹ a happy turn of phrase, though one that does not seem to be fully justified. Hillman’s ‘enemies’ were rather the coach operators on the A12 from East London to the coast, and he continued to pay attention to that side of his business, which acquired the title Hillman’s Saloon Coaches and Airways Ltd. The railway-associated companies were the least significant of his competitors on the road. His backing came from small private investors, and in due course he received compensation for that part of his coach business acquired by the London Passenger Transport Board. Like many coach operators of the period, his standard vehicle was the Gifford, and at one time he was financially associated with the manufacturers of that chassis.



Edward Hillman
from collection of Chris Hillman of Northumbria

Hillman’s type of air service required a fairly small and versatile airliner, and Pudney tells how he claimed to have designed the de Havilland Dragon, the so-called ‘branch-liner’ aircraft that was certainly well-suited to his needs.¹⁰

In 1934, the airline’s base was moved to “Essex Airport” (later, RAF Stapleford Tawney), which had better facilities than Maylands, but lay further from the A12. It is important to note that no attempt was being made to seek traffic from Central London for either the coach or the air services, another example of Hillman’s singleness of purpose. Just how successful the business was we can only estimate, but despite Aldcroft’s categorical statement that during the 1930s “no single airline operating within Great Britain ever made a profit”¹¹, it seems unlikely that this applied to the totality of Hillman’s transport operations. One piece of evidence that should not be ignored: when the business ‘went public’ at the end of 1934, with the backing of Whitehall Securities, the 400,000 ordinary shares were “snapped up in a few hours”.¹² A few days later, Hillman died of a heart attack and Sir Gerald d’Erlanger purchased his shares.

The special contribution that Hillman made, lay in the personal style of management that had marked his success in running coaches, combined with a determination to get the most out of both men and machines. He paid low wages, and expected complete devotion to the business, and he set the pace by his own efforts, and by the fact that

he qualified as a pilot and flew his own aircraft, like the typical coach owner driving his own vehicles. Never happier than when traffic was heavy, he would turn a plane round to do another relief from Paris after the pilot had had time for a cup of tea. He has been accused of cutting corners in maintenance, but King disputes this,¹³ and certainly the airline never had a serious accident. The most effective criticism seems to have been that he tended to expect services to be maintained when weather conditions should perhaps have grounded the aircraft, or at least have reduced their load.



“NEW AIR LINE TO PARIS – OPENING FLIGHT TODAY
A new air line to Paris was inaugurated by Mr. EDWARD HILLMAN at Romford today (Sat) when the first aeroplane on the service left for Paris. A twice-daily service will be run in both directions. Mr. E. HILLMAN and the pilot of the first liner to leave, Mr. H. WOOD.”

courtesy Phil Steer,
Romford, Now & Then (www.romford.org/)

There is no doubt that Hillman’s practice of operating aircraft like coaches and not like ocean liners was a good part of his success, and that it was seen as such at the time. The author has in his possession a report to the Essex County Council dating from this period, on future airport needs in the county, and its assumption is that every town of any size in Essex will need some such facility; an assumption, one might think, that was not uncoloured by Hillman’s activities. A year after his death, with the coach services sold to the area bus operators concerned, Hillman’s company was amalgamated with Spartan Airlines Ltd and United Airways Ltd to form British Airways Ltd, the government’s second ‘chosen instrument’ for the application of subsidy to commercial aviation.¹⁴

Not far from Hillman’s base was the home of another bus operator who went into aviation at this time, Walter Thurgood of Ware (1903-1973).¹⁵ His principal business was always the construction of commercial vehicle bodies, which had a reputation for strength and solidity, but this led him to form People’s Motor Services Ltd, which developed a small network of bus services in north-east Hertfordshire. These were acquired by the London Passenger Transport Board in November 1933, and in the following month Thurgood was instrumental in forming Jersey Airways; Guernsey Airways followed in November 1934. Both companies soon came into the control of

Channel Island Airways, which subsequently became wholly owned by the Great Western and Southern Railways. Thurgood's interest had ceased by 1936, though he served for a time on the boards of two companies on the mainland, United Airways and Northern & Scottish.

Thurgood's interest seems to have been short-lived, and we have no evidence of any transfer of managerial skills from road to air transport operation. The fact that he continued to sell coach bodies to Channel Islands operators, however, indicates a continued link with the islands.¹⁶

More significant are the activities of a remarkable Scottish busman, John Sword, which were cut short by the direct intervention of the railway interest. His firm, Midland Bus Services of Airdrie, formed in 1924, became the area operator in the Scottish combine that was put together by Sir William Thomson. Sword remained in charge as it grew to become the Western SMT Company Ltd. in 1932. He was a practical manager, and a pioneer who developed the coach service between Glasgow and London, using diesel vehicles as early 1932. Klapper records his hospitality and "sound busman's common sense"; he also says that Sword had been a baker, but gives no details.¹⁷

There is little published information about Sword's aviation activities, and what there is, is confused. From private communications it is possible to expand upon this, and to identify the threat he appeared to proffer to the railways.¹⁸ He had served in the Royal Flying Corps, and in 1931 began to plan regular air services; there seems no question as to his operating standards. In 1933 he formed a business called Midland & Scottish Air Ferries Ltd, which was perhaps an unfortunate choice of title in view of the interest held by the London, Midland & Scottish Railway in his bus company; but it was an accurate one. The firm had two bases, one at Hooton Park in Cheshire and the other at Renfrew, and its first service lasted for seven days from 20 February 1933, flying from Hooton to Birmingham (Castle Bromwich) for the British Industries Fair. Significantly, "a bus type of frequency operated and the flying time was 45 minutes".¹⁹ The fare was 27/6 single and 40/- return, while for a further 5/- a connection could be made between Hooton and Liverpool. The fleet consisted of Airspeed Ferries, de Havilland Dragon Moths (DH84) and Fox Moths (DH83), later joined by an Avro Ten and an Avro Sixteen.

On 1 June 1933 Midland & Scottish opened a service twice daily between Renfrew and Belfast (Aldergrove) via Campbeltown, and another three times a week between Renfrew and Islay, also calling at Campbeltown. Both continued through the winter months, although the third service, Hooton - Liverpool - Dublin (Baldonnal) was suspended. In 1934 the British Industries Fair at Birmingham was again served, this time in collaboration with Redditch Garages Ltd., from both Liverpool and London (Heston). Finally, in April 1934 the delivery of the Avro Sixteen was marked by the inauguration of two new routes - and a naming ceremony (it was called Marchioness of Londonderry) performed by the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald. The services were flown twice each weekday, and were London (Romford) - Birmingham - Liverpool - Glasgow and Liverpool - Isle of Man - Belfast. The London terminal hints at a connection between Hillman and Sword, especially as it was subsequently altered to

Abridge, one of the names used for Hillman's 'Essex Airport'.

Most sources are silent as to the circumstances of the demise of Midland & Scottish Air Ferries, but Lambden hints at "railway pressure, connected with their interest in Western SMT".²⁰ This, he remarked in a private communication was 'an understatement', and Sword's son (W L Sword), who was later on the board of the bus company, has provided his own account, as told to him by his father.²¹ When Sword's bus interests became associated with Sir William Thomson's Scottish Motor Traction Company (SMT) to form the railway-associated Scottish bus combine, after 1929, he was required to enter into a contract precluding him from operating in competition with SMT. As W L Sword points out, this did not involve aviation unless SMT itself were to be operating aircraft. In a private communication to the author, Mr Sword stated that his father was forced to wind up Midland & Scottish Air Ferries through the deliberate intervention of Sir Josiah Stamp (later Lord Stamp), who at the time represented the LMSR on the board of SMT. Stamp, it would appear, persuaded the SMT board to buy an aeroplane, thereby placing Sword in breach of his contract. Sword, not unnaturally, was embittered by this - it involved him in writing off some £230,000 of his own money and told his son that he said to Stamp that "honourable men don't do business this way".

The problem that arises with this account is the evidence from Davies²² that the 'short-lived' SMT operations lasted from July to October 1932, when Sword was still making plans for his airline. Stamp's subsequent intervention cannot be ruled out on this account, for the implication of Sword's story is that a single aircraft was put into service with the specific purpose of putting him outwith the terms of his contract, and this could quite well have been a subsequent and short-lived activity. There is also a hint of substance in Sword's account, insofar as his pilot for the Airspeed Ferry on the 1933 BIF service later became Chief Pilot, in charge of flying and ground staff, for the SMT aviation department,²³ indicating that the company was in the flying business at a later date than Davies records.

There is a considerable plausibility about Stamp's concern. Like Hillman, Sword had the imagination to free himself from modal limitations, and the contemporary policy of the four main line railway companies shows how fearful they were of intermodal competition. It should be remembered that the expansion of express coach services between 1925 and 1931 had made inroads into rail earnings, and that much local traffic had only been retained by cutting the day return train fares to the levels of the competing bus firms. Against such a background, Sword's success in establishing a reliable coach service between Glasgow and London — even if the single journey took 16 hours and 23 minutes — must have boded ill for the West Coast Main Line if translated to the air. And if Hillman was doing it - and the LMSR was actively monitoring his activities — then why not Sword, with his superior resources and connections? And if Hillman remains a shadowy figure in all this, Lambden records that his company took over one of the Midland and Scottish services in 1934.²⁴ Further support to W L Sword's account of his father's departure from commercial aviation is to be found in a study of the relationship of the railways and air transport

by Aldcroft,²⁵ where he remarks that "apart from one or two cases, notably Midland & Scottish Air Ferries and possibly North Eastern Airways, there appears to be little evidence to confirm the belief that the railways deliberately tried to strangle private operators". The generally dismissive content of this remark must make the reference to Sword's company the more pointed. Aldcroft also quotes Stamp as stressing the dangers of air competition at the LMSR annual general meeting on 23 February 1934.²⁶ There seems little doubt from Aldcroft's account that the danger to the West Coast Main Line traffic caused Sword's airline to be seen as a particular threat.

The disposal of Sword's interest is the subject of conflicting stories, but there appears to have been a link with George Nicholson, whose Northern Airways Ltd was formed in 1934, becoming Northern & Scottish Airways Ltd later in the same year; Davies states that this company acquired Sword's routes. He also refers to Nicholson as "another busman",²⁷ but Lambden records that he could find "no clear account of Mr Nicholson's link with the bus world".²⁸ Control of Northern & Scottish passed in 1935 to Whitehall Securities, and the board was joined at that time by Walter Thurgood. In 1937 the company passed to Scottish Airways, in which there was a railway interest, and also a minority holding in the hands of the shipping and road transport company, David MacBrayne (1928) Ltd, itself partially owned by the LMSR.

In 1938 the British Electric Traction Company Ltd obtained a thirty per cent holding in British & Foreign Aviation Ltd, which had then been formed to consolidate certain holdings in operating companies. BET at that time was predominantly a holding company for bus operations, and the other major shareholder in British & Foreign was Sir Hugo Cunliffe-Owen. A minor interest was also held by the Birmingham & Midland Motor Omnibus Company Ltd (Midland Red), itself a BET subsidiary, though with further local shareholders in the Midlands.

Despite BET's lack of a controlling interest in British & Foreign, the company was registered at the BET's offices at 88 Kingsway, in London, and its Secretary was B P Beddow, a BET nominee. Sir John Spencer Wills, who himself had qualified as a pilot, represented BET on the holding company's board. A complicated inter-holding network developed, not unlike that which governed the BET bus subsidiaries, including at one time or another the following operating companies:

- Air Booking Company Ltd
- Air Commerce Ltd
- Channel Air Ferries Ltd
- Great Western & Southern Air Lines Ltd
- Isle of Man Air Services Ltd
- Olley Air Services Ltd
- West Coast Air Services Ltd

The Air Booking, Channel Air Ferries and Olley interests had been acquired by BET prior to the formation of British & Foreign, while there were railway interests in the Great Western & Southern and Isle of Man companies. Development of the BET 'family' was interrupted by the war. Certain of the companies, with others, formed the Associated Airways Joint Committee (for which BET provided the secretary), which operated to Dublin, the Isle of Man, the Scilly Isles and elsewhere and provided charter

services. In 1942 Sir Hugo Cunliffe-Owen decided to dispose of his holding, and while BET would have been ready to acquire his shares, and with them control of the company, it appears that he preferred to sell them to the Great Western Railway. The BET board decided not to continue as a minority partner, and disposed of its own interest in October 1942, leaving British & Foreign owned as follows:-

- LNER and LMSR — 62.6 per cent
- GWR — 24.9 per cent
- British Overseas Airways — 12.5 per cent

The end of the story

There remain only two examples to quote from the post-war, post-nationalisation period, both of them being associated with coach rather than bus operation. One of those was the Midlands firm of Don Everall, with interests in haulage and car sales as well as coaches. Starting in a small way in 1946, the original company, Modern Transport (Wolverhampton) Ltd, was merged with Lees-Hill Aviation Ltd. of Birmingham in 1951 to form Don Everall (Aviation) Ltd. With its main base at Birmingham (Edmdon), the Everall airline built up a substantial business in the 1950s, flying services, charter and freight operations, both internally and to the continent. In 1960 there was a further re-organisation, when the company was merged with Air Safaris Ltd. The story of Everall's activities²⁹ bears a strong resemblance to the development of independent coach operations of the period, including those of the Everall road subsidiaries.

Much the same could be said of the second example, the South Manchester coach firm of Finglands,³⁰ which in 1948 started flying two Avro Ansons. Although chiefly concerned with charter work, Fingland's Airways Ltd obtained in 1950 a British European Airways Associate Agreement, and for three years flew a summer Saturday service between Manchester (Ringway) and Newquay. Flying ceased however in May 1953.

What then should be the conclusions to be drawn from this mixed record of enterprise? Perhaps they can only be tentative, but a picture does seem to emerge, in which the entrepreneurial skills required for success in commercial aviation are not dissimilar to those for express coach operation. At least, on the limited information, it may be significant that Hillman and Sword were successful coach operators, while Thurgood, who made much less of a mark in aviation, was a coach-builder with a strictly bus operating subsidiary. The Everall and Fingland activities were similarly linked to coach work.

Hillman, Sword and Everall were also qualified pilots themselves, as was Sir John Spencer Wills, whose vision for BET in the post-war years for a time included air transport. But what may seem most impressive about Hillman and Sword is their capacity for seeing both the wood and the trees, and their freedom from organisational constraints. John Birch christened the era of rapid bus expansion the "Roaring Twenties"³¹, and the question that must remain is why there did not follow a decade that justified the soubriquet of the "Flying Thirties". The untimely death of Edward Hillman must be one reason, for here was a man who had earned the confidence of the City. Sword's withdrawal from the scene, whatever the cause, must be equally significant.

The present author must speak with a certain reserve, since his field of research is bus and coach history, rather than commercial aviation, but perhaps he may be permitted a comment. The extraordinarily rapid expansion of express coach services after 1925 took place in an atmosphere of unconstrained entrepreneurial drive, with neither quantity control nor subsidy. It is probably true that there was over-investment, and that only the introduction of quantity licensing in 1931, which gave every operator a saleable monopoly, prevented a number of bankruptcies, but nobody meddled, not even the railway companies. The 1930s, on the other hand, were a time of great meddling, and perhaps most of all in the growth of commercial

aviation, which was at last attracting its own entrepreneurs. The railway companies sought to protect their interest according to their lights, and the government sought to influence the structure of the industry, leaning eventually towards nationalisation.

Without such intervention, may we ask, would the air transport industry have developed an internal network of services reflecting best practice by road, with a minimum of up-market trimmings, and the application of Searle's policy of obtaining maximum use of the aircraft. If anything, the examples of Hillman and Sword would seem to point that way, flying busmen as they both were.

Footnotes

- 1 The principal sources used have been P F C Davies, *A History of the World's Airlines* (1964); R Higham, *Britain's Imperial Air Routes* (1960); A C Merton-Jones, *British Independent Airlines since 1946*; and J Pudney, *The Seven Skies* (1959). Others are listed in the following notes.
- 2 Charles E Lee, *A Chapter in London Bus History*, an Omnibus Society paper reproduced in *The Omnibus* (1971), p. 181.
- 3 Pudney, op cit., p. 58.
- 4 Especially Higham, Lee and Pudney, op cit., and E Birkhead, *The Daimler Airway, 1922—1924*, *Journal of Transport History*
- 5 Birkhead, op. cit., quoting *Flight*, XIV, 1922, pp.207—8.
- 6 Ibid., quoting *Flight*, XV, 1923, pp. 150, 573.
- 7 For information concerning Wright's aviation activities I am indebted to Mr John Loft of Louth (letter dated 9 March 1966) and Mr Ian Tye, Secretary of the *Lincolnshire & Humberside Transport Review*.
- 8 P W Brooks, *A Short History of London's Airports* *Journal of Transport History*, First Series, III, 1957.
- 9 Higham, op cit.
- 10 Davies, op. cit.
- 11 DR Aldcroft, *British Imperial Airways*, *Business History*, VI, 1961, p. 113.
- 12 Higham, op. cit.
- 13 Per Mr John King, with whom I discussed the whole subject in a lengthy correspondence.
- 14 Higham, op cit.
- 15 *Newsletter* had a reference to Thurgood's bus, coachbuilding and aviation interests in No.38, p.13
- 16 Richard Storey tells me that between 1937 and 1958 Thurgood's works at Ware supplied bodies for at least 21 buses for Channel Islands operators.
- 17 C F Klapper *Golden Age of Buses* (1978) at pp.205-206 (but beware of a confused statement that Sword had been an air transport operator 'before he proved his mettle as a busman')
- 18 I am indebted to Sword's son, Mr W L Sword for providing me with the unpublished monograph by Gillies, referred to below.
- 19 J D Gillies, *Midland & Scottish Air Ferries Ltd*, unpublished monograph (see note 18 above).
- 20 W Lambden *The Manx Transport Systems* (1964)
- 21 Letters from Mr W L Sword (see also Note 18)
- 22 Davies, op. cit.
- 23 Gillies, op. cit.
- 24 Lambden op. cit.
- 25 D H. Aldcroft, *The Railways and Air Transport in Great Britain, 1933—1939*, *The Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, XII, 1965, p. 60.
- 26 Ibid., p. 50.
- 27 Davies op. cit.
- 28 Lambden op. cit.
- 29 Merton-Jones, op. cit.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 J M Birch, *The Roaring Twenties*, Omnibus Society paper reproduced *The Omnibus* (1971), pp. 11 ff.

Getting to the Aerodrome

This paragraph simply throws out questions to which readers may have some answers. We may safely assume that the passengers on Midland & Scottish Air Ferries Ltd first venture would be Liverpool, Birkenhead or Ellesmere Port businessmen, going to the British Industries Fair. The air services to Jersey or to the Isle of Man would attract anyone prepared to pay a little extra to avoid a train journey, plus fairly lengthy sea crossing. The likely passengers for some of the other services are less obvious, but plainly existed.

How did they get to the aerodromes? The businessmen may have had cars, and even chauffeurs. Most other people, in 1933/4, would not. The air traffic would never have justified a bus service — or would it? Did any of Hillman's coaches have time-tabled diversions to Maylands or to "Essex Airport"?

Keeping this firmly to the 1930s, the only instance that

I can readily cite is that H & J Tetlow of Flixton, had a Flixton - Blackpool express coach service, on which coach-air bookings to the Isle of Man were offered. Did the coaches call at Blackpool Airport?¹ Tetlows connected with Blackpool & West Coast Air Services Ltd, a company formed in April 1933, with a Blackpool - Ronaldsway air service starting in June 1933. Bear in mind also that airports were rather primitive in the 1930s. Lambden mentions that there were no facilities at all at Ronaldsway; passengers assembled at the nearby Derbyhaven Hotel, under supervision of the manageress.²

RA

1. Blackpool Airport = Squires Gate, but just possibly might have been Stanley Park. Stanley Park did not go out of use as an aerodrome until c.1938.
2. *Manx Transport Systems* by W Lambden (Omnibus Society, 1964), pp.57-58

Handcross Accident

ALAN LAMBERT

One hundred years ago on July 12th, the first major accident occurred to a motorbus, in which there were multiple deaths.

The London Motor Omnibus Co. (Vanguard) had started running excursions to Brighton in 1905 using their standard Milnes Daimler open top double-decks that normally operated daily in London.

On this day, the bus (A 9185) was hired by a party of Orpington tradespeople for a day trip to Brighton. There were 34 male passengers including a young boy, but excluding the driver and conductor. All went well until the bus got to Handcross, five miles south of Crawley. Passing through the village, the bus then encountered a mile-long steep downward slope.

According to witnesses the bus started to run away, swaying from side to side and quickly got beyond the driver's control. The driver applied the brakes with no effect and shortly after, a piece of the machinery fell into the road. The bus, now completely out of control, rounded a bend in the road and crashed into an oak tree on the right-hand side of the road. A large branch of the tree carried away the top deck and the 21 occupants were thrown onto the road or into a wood. Of these seven were killed instantly, another three dying later from their injuries. All ten inside were injured, mainly due to their being thrown through the windows or from flying glass and debris. Two other passengers were sitting with the driver and one standing on the back platform talking to the conductor. They were also injured. The driver was the only one to escape major injury, even the conductor who realised there was a problem and jumped from the moving bus, suffered a fractured skull.

On hearing of the accident, Mr. Eager the Chief Engineer of the Brighton, Hove & Preston United Omnibus Co. took Milnes Daimler double deck CD 436, picked up medical staff and set out for Handcross. The casualties were taken to the Red Lion Hotel for emergency treatment and it was at this hotel that the Inquest was held.

At the Inquest into the deaths, evidence was given by an ex-driver who had been cautioned for dangerous driving to the effect that, if the brakes were applied for any length of time they became red hot, and drivers had developed a practice of 'running out of gear' down the hill. There was a great deal of discussion about the working of the brakes and whether they were adequate for long journeys.

Finally, evidence was given by Reginald James a consulting engineer. Having examined the damage to the machinery he had concluded that the driver was going downhill with the engine declutched. Finding the bus getting beyond his control he applied the footbrake, which gave no effect. He then allowed the clutch to come in, and the car, at a speed of say 24 m.p.h, was driving the main gear at twice the speed of the engine, which was governed at 12 m.p.h. This threw an abnormally heavy stress on the cardan shaft and a fracture occurred at the end of the second motion shaft. Simultaneously the gearbox was

fractured. The ball bearing at the near end of the gearbox fell into the road releasing one end of the main gear, which then dropped out of mesh with the other wheels being held at the other end of the footbrake. The forward end of the cardan shaft dropped forming a 'sprag'. The differential shaft end then fractured and the cardan shaft as a whole fell into the road. The main gear then dropped from the footbrake. The bus was then completely out of control.

The jury, after deliberating, concluded that the driver could not be held to blame, but this type of vehicle was clearly unsuitable for use on country roads.

Finally, it was reported by the 'Industrial Motor Review' on the 15th August that souvenir hunters had done so much damage to the oak tree that the police had cut it down. One party of cyclists had even taken hatchets with them for the purpose.

[For those interested in the technicalities, the bus was fitted with three brakes; the hand-brake which pushed metal shoes against the rubber rear tyres on either side. This was essentially a parking brake. There were two foot-brakes, one when depressed gripped the second motion shaft which projected through the front of the gear-box casing. The brake drums were made of cast steel and the brake shoes of cast-iron. Obviously this generated considerable heat when activated and a water tank was fitted, opened by a tap on the dashboard, to cool the brakes. Interestingly, partly depressing the brake pedal also disengaged the clutch, fine for local bus work, but hardly suitable for long hills! The third brake, was also a footbrake, this time working on the ends of the countershaft, just inside the spur wheels that drive the rear road wheels. Again these were cast-iron brake shoes acting on cast steel brake drums, but without the water-cooling device]

By agreement with both Alan Lambert and the Editor of Newsletter, our member David Bubier (who is also Editor of the Omnibus Society's Provincial Historical Research Group "PHRG Newsletter") appends a note which challenges the widely-held view that Handcross was a disaster which set back the development of long-distance bus services for twenty years. It follows on from an original challenge that he made in PHRG Newsletter No.87 entitled "The Handcross Legacy".

At the time of PHRG Newsletter 87, I recall a conversation with the late John Dunabin about how such perceived notions become set in stone, when even a fairly general study of the industry of the period told quite a different story. The value of Alan's piece (above) is, I feel, in unearthing the engineering assessment, which I had not previously seen, but which effectively supports the line I was taking.

Another factor in the rapid development of commercial vehicle design from about 1908 was the influence of the War Department, determining standard types that were to be requisitioned, the 'subsidy' arrangements, etc. It is a

strand that has been touched on, but largely glossed over, that the British army mobilisation strategy in the pre-World War I period was increasingly based on road motor transport, unlike their German or French counterparts who continued to rely almost exclusively on rail. This is, of course, the 'back area' logistics, for the 'front line' all sides saw the horse as the only practical

option, at least initially. Far from being Colonel Blimp dinosaurs, the general staff of the day (even 'Butcher' Haig) were far sighted individuals. Really it is an overall topic that 'someone' should look at in more depth at some stage.

DJB

Segregation of labour?

DAVID HARMAN

In Newsletter 38, at page 8, there was a brief extract from the *Southend-on-Sea Corporation Light Railways Regulations and Instructions for Drivers and Conductors (Buses)*.

The booklet dates from 1931 and seems to have been produced to coincide with the delivery of seven new AEC Regal buses. Until 1931, the Corporation had only operated trams and trolleybuses, although there had earlier been seven pioneer buses in use until 1916. There is presumed to have been an existing rule book for tram and trolleybus crews.

A booklet from 1936 entitled *Southend-on-Sea Corporation Transport Department General Instructions, Rules, Regulations and Byelaws for the Guidance of Employees* covers all three modes, with sections and rules tailored to suit their individual peculiarities. This comprised 107 pages, a measure of the complexities that crews had to cope with on a system served by trams, trolleybuses and motor buses.

Non-member and Southend expert, Richard Delahoy, recently posed a question specific to Southend, but probably relevant elsewhere: Did drivers keep strictly to just one form of traction or were some dual-trained (eg for motor buses and trolleybuses)? When the trams ended, drivers would have migrated to trolleybuses or buses, but would a driver have been expected to drive a trolleybus one day and a motor bus the next?

With conductors, it would have been easier for them to work on any form of traction but, again, did this happen in practice, or were they managed as separate groups of staff?

The Southend trams ended in 1942 and the trolleybuses in 1954.

Electric Milk Floats on Malta

ROGER F. de BOER

After almost ten visits to the friendly island I had failed to encounter any evidence of battery electric vehicles plying there. In 1985, I had boarded a bus to Zurrieq, for no other reason than it was a Canadian Dodge, and soon found myself at the Terminus Snack Bar where I found hanging in a frame four old photos. — three buses but in the top right-hand corner was what I later learned to be a Metrovick electric milk float. It was more likely that it had been built at the Sheffield rather than the Manchester factory of that firm. The word SAFI also appeared — this village near to Zurrieq was where the float's driver still lived.

Further research revealed that the vehicle was introduced on the island in 1938 — one of a batch of twelve (numbered 6201-6212) which coincided with the establishment of the Milk Marketing Union (M.M.U.) which operated from the former Railway Station at Hamrun.

I later found the Safi milkman and learned from him that the system followed the British pattern — fixed rounds with return to the depot — then left on charge. He even demonstrated how he drove it — so a nostalgic chord had been struck here.

For a time this fleet of floats became an enigma, for during the middle of WWII they disappear — and like Rosemary Sutcliffe's Roman Legion in *Eagle of the Ninth* (which marched into the Scottish mists) they are never seen again. This period of time (1938 to 194?) must surely be the shortest service life of electric milk floats.

Few photographic records exist — there is a view of 6201 in the *Malta Times* when first introduced in 1938, a Metrovick advertisement in *Transport* magazine in U.K., some shots in an MMU propaganda brochure and lastly a wartime part view with people queuing for sustenance.

Further visits to Malta produced some surprises — I found a scrapman who could produce a list of spares for the Metrovicks years after their withdrawal, some technical drawings, which with the aid of staff I "smuggled" out of the island — these are destined for a museum, and I had missed a photo-opportunity by about 18 months — for one of the floats reached Mellieha Bay as a summer changing-room — but the government had had a "clear-out" before I discovered this.

Their actual fate I only encountered as late as 2003 — that they were redeployed for internal hospital use during the hostilities and not to transport explosives as I had romantically imagined.

Association Matters

► NEW MEMBERS

J O Richards, Colwyn Bay
R. Beaver, Corsham, Wiltshire

► A VERY TOPICAL CONFERENCE

For many years, the Roads and Road Transport History Association has held an autumn Symposium. It had to call them Symposia, because the R&RTHA was originally known as The Roads & Road Transport History Conference. Now that we are an Association, instead of a Conference, we can call the Symposia, Conferences. This is being applied from 2006 onwards.

Members should have received a month or so ago, booking forms for the 2006 Conference to be held at the Quality Hotel Reading, Oxford Road, Reading, on Saturday 28 October. This year's Conference is called "Private or Public". The subject was thought to be interesting when it was conceived, but outside developments in the past few months have made it not only interesting, but highly topical. The basic framework is a keynote opening talk ranging over the broad subject, to be followed by three other speakers who will address particular aspects – the historical significance of municipal socialism, the practicalities of management of a municipal bus undertaking, and the nationalisation and denationalisation of road freight haulage.

It will be seen that bus de-regulation and its impact, and the privatisation of the National Bus Company are not core themes, but they are unlikely to escape mention. We hope to look back further into history to the period at the close of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth, when there was strong municipal pride and the concept of municipal enterprise carried with it an element of idealism.

The R&RTH Conference (as it was in 1991) invited the late Charles Dunbar to be its first President. This was partly on the strength of a booklet, sadly now out of print, that embodied the Presidential Address that he delivered in 1966 to the Transport Ticket Society. It was entitled "Idealism and Competition – The Fares Policy of the London County Council Tramways"¹. (Several other facets of Charles Dunbar's career also made him revered²). Dunbar's portrayal of the municipal socialism that inspired the policies of the LCC bring out the question of whether this Conference will provide us with "Lessons from History". Are we too far removed in 2006, from the position a century ago? For its time, the London County Council Tramways was a very large organisation indeed; perhaps one better placed to provide lessons for today than the many other municipal electric tramways, some very small, that were developing at that time. How significant is it that these were under truly local control, and that they were used by virtually all the citizenry, including, crucially, the Councillors themselves?

But that brings us to our speakers. Geoffrey Hilditch, talking on "The Ups and Downs of a Municipal Transport Manager", may have a great deal of cogent comment on both the freedoms and the restraints under which he found himself in Halifax, as a Manager with an

engineering background. (Do read, or re-read, the two volumes of his wonderful autobiography, "Steel Wheels and Rubber Tyres", published by the Oakwood Press³).

Dr Martin Higginson will be expounding on the whole gamut of municipal trading enterprise that came to fruition in that period of citizens' real pride in their towns, their town halls, their indoor markets, their Mayors, Aldermen and Councillors, and even, at least in one instance, pride in a municipal brass band to play in the Council's parks.⁴ Those at the Conference may encounter dissenting views if they hold that the zenith of that era was attained when the electric trams were on every local postcard; Geoffrey Hilditch may contend that strong municipal pride lasted for several more decades, embracing the motor buses that long outlived the trams.

Grahame Boyes will deal with the rather strange interlude that came and went quite quickly, the nationalisation and denationalisation of road freight haulage. *Newsletter* has pointed, in two articles, to the wartime background of already intense government control of haulage.⁵ (There have also been two 'worm's eye view' perspectives: a short item in *Newsletter No.39*, by David Trindle, a one-time junior employee of British Road Services, and Ken Durston's reminiscences in *Newsletter 46*).

Professor Stuart Cole has been given a wide-open field on the whole subject: "Private or Public". Although he will be approaching it from an historical perspective, he could not ask for greater topicality than the subject is now provoking. We have Gwyneth Dunwoody and the Transport Select Committee of the House of Commons saying forcefully that they want to see improved bus services, but indicating that this may be achieved by franchising monopoly rights to operators. Ken Livingstone, the Mayor of London, is injecting gigantic sums of money into bus services, but, in return, is achieving real growth in passenger numbers. The Welsh Assembly Government has placed the promotion of public transport very high on its agenda. It has stimulated the voluntary grouping of the 22 Welsh unitary authorities into four regional consortia to apply local factors to the general policies. We have had the introduction of government imposed, but locally applied, free travel for pensioners, in England, from 1 April 2006, which has given rise to significant problems in the determination of centralised funding, cross-boundary anomalies in some cases, and wildly varying reports of any actual resultant growth in bus travel (2% to 50%). It will not escape historians' notice that the Conference will take place 20 years and two days after 26 October 1986, when bus de-regulation under Transport Act 1985 took effect.

To be offered a meeting of stimulating quality, with an interesting batch of speakers talking to an intelligent audience, is something that you should not miss. The cost is only £36-00 (including lunch): it is a bargain. Book for yourself – and do bring someone else along as well, though both of you will have to pay. Please book in advance, we need to know approximate numbers; book now if you can. Use the booking form that was sent to you last month; but if you cannot find it, please just write

to G K Knowles, 17 Spring Grove, Fetcham, Leatherhead KT22 9NN enclosing a cheque for £36.00 (per ticket) made out to Roads and Road Transport History Association Ltd. Mention any dietary requirements for the lunch that is included in the price.

Finally, a serious reminder to our corporate members. The R&RTHA Conferences are not put on just for our own individual members; anyone interested is welcome. Our Corporates are strongly urged to have a presence; please pay for your Representative to come; and then, in print and verbally, please publicise the Conference and encourage some of your own members to come to it. Time is getting short — please act now.

Ed. RA

- 1 The text of "Idealism and Competition" was also published in the May and June 1967 issues of *Modern Tramway*; the booklet reprinted the text from *Modern Tramway*.
- 2 See *Newsletter No.39*, pp.6 and 13 re Charles Dunbar (1900-1993) and the preservation of his papers at the Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick; also see the *Companion to British Road Haulage History* at page 138.
- 3 "Steel Wheels and Rubber Tyres" was reviewed in *Newsletter No.37* by David Harman. See also, in this *Newsletter*, the review written by Geoffrey Hilditch himself of the book *75 Years of the Traffic Commissioners – A Lawyer's Personal View*.
- 4 The London County Council had brass bands (plural) which played in Battersea (and presumably other) Parks, by the mid-1890s.
- 5 *Newsletter No.41* "Government and Road Haulage"; *Newsletter No.46* "United Action in Road Transport".

Introducing our Members ~ Paul Lacey

I first became interested in buses in 1962, after being sent to a school some 8 miles from my home. However, as my maternal grandfather had worked for London General/London Transport for over 30 years, there may have already been a subliminal influence.

The local territorial operator, the Thames Valley Traction Co. Ltd., covered quite a wide geographical area and had a fairly interesting fleet, so it took me a while to fully explore both. Armed with my Ian Allan 'British Bus Fleets – South Central' and my TV timetable, I set off in search of those elusive vehicles and the farther reaches of the company's operating area. However, in order to conserve money for film for my Kodak 'Brownie' camera, much of the travelling was by bicycle!

At that time I wanted to read a proper history of the 'Valley (as it was universally known), but I soon discovered it was something of a Cinderella amongst the operators and had virtually nothing written about it. Talking to the older crews I soon found there was quite a lot to be learned, so I began interviewing those old stagers. This often led to further leads to other retired staff, most of whom went right back to the earliest days, and it is only with their contribution that such detailed research has been possible.

Two significant events occurred within a year of each other, both of which had a marked influence of my researches. Firstly, through a chance lead, I was put in touch with Michael Plunkett, a lifelong Thames Valley fan, and he has been my conscience ever since, keeping me firmly to the grindstone on the trail of old TV artefacts, photos and details.

The other factor was the regrettable (and ultimately

disastrous) 'merger' of Thames Valley with the Aldershot & District concern to form 'Alder Valley' in 1972. The latter was a very sad episode to witness for anyone who remembered TV as an efficient and proud concern; it added further impetus to recording its history for posterity.

Research continued, along with a very detailed study of the Newbury & District Motor Services Ltd. (which TV had acquired in 1950). In the latter, I made many friends amongst the old busmen (and women) of the Newbury area, each of them leading me to further interviewees! Between 1985 and the present day I have turned these researches into series of eight books, fuller details of which can be found on my website at

http://uk.geocities.com/paul_lacey_transport_books

I have always firmly believed that transport history has a wider significance than merely to the enthusiast fraternity, and I have worked hard to that end, making my books a social and local history alongside the transport content. Over the past 15 years I have also given over 50 illustrated lectures on my specialist subjects to a wide variety of groups.

I am currently able to offer a 50% discount on certain titles of books to R&RTHA members, please quote that you are a member when ordering (all orders sent post free):

- A History of the Thames Valley Traction Co. Ltd., 1920-1930 Price £15.00 Offer £7.50
- A History of the Thames Valley Traction Co. Ltd., 1931-1945 Price £25.00 Offer £12.50
- Thackray's Way – A Family in Road Transport Price £10.00 Offer £5.00
- South Midland 1921-1970 (author David Flitton) Price £11.00 Offer £5.50

NEWSLETTER No.48

- The target date for issue of No. 48 is
7 December 2006
Contributions by
7 November please

- Provisional target date for No. 49 is
8 March 2007
Contributions by 6 February
- The 2006 subscription covers Nos.45 to 48

Letters

- "WHAT DID YOU DO IN THE WAR, DEVA?"
(pp.8 and 15, *Newsletter* 45; pp.11 and 12, No.46)

What an impressive book this is, most of all for the editing and presenting of what must have been a very varied and heterogeneous collection of material. Perhaps the most poignant entry is the list of aircraft which crashed without being attacked in any way. And the last batch of Wellington bombers assembled, tested and then flown to maintenance units for scrap in 1945.

Odd that nobody adopted the geodetic fuselage construction for motor vehicles. Or did they?

Ian Yearsley

Have now had time to digest the book, a very fine production. Whilst I have always been a sponge as regards accounts of the World War 2 home front in Kent, the 'front line', it was an interesting comparison to see similar dealing with a 'back area' in the north. I thank those who apparently thought my piece on Bristol worthy of this prize.

Dave Bubier

► INSPIRATION IN THE TRAFFIC COURTS

It did not take me long to ingest Geoffrey Jones *75 Years of The Traffic Commissioners* and it rekindled in me the debt I owe the author for stimulating an interest in an area of road transport that is so often overlooked.

In the early 1970s I was working for the Bristol Omnibus Company and recall our Traffic Manager, Bernard Rootham, calling me - then a 20 year old traffic clerk - to his office. He apologised that there would be no likelihood of me going into scheduling or the day-to-day traffic, which it seemed everyone wanted to do, but that he had a challenging job lined up for me instead. Experience told me this actually meant a job nobody else wanted to. In fact, I became Acting Fares Officer and, under the supervision of Vernon Bettison, did much of the ground work involved in the seemingly endless fares increases of the time.

With falling passenger numbers the industry attacked the problem of rising costs in only one way - increase fares. At that time faretables were an attachment to the Road Service Licence and revising them involved an application to the Traffic Commissioners. Applications by larger operators were automatically heard at public sittings and Bristol Omnibus was always represented by Geoffrey Jones. He will not remember me, but I was struck by this man who could grasp the arguments even though he was not involved in bus operation - remember I was only 20 and never having experienced legal proceedings before did not appreciate how vital good counsel was. I hung on every word of conversations between Geoffrey Jones, Bernard Rootham and also Geoff Frankis from Western National, and thought - this is the life. Who cares if some double decker has just been re-engined from a Bristol to a Gardner, these traffic courts are far more exciting. My fascination with Road Service Licensing and traffic courts was ensured.

I left Bristol Omnibus and went to work for the well known independent Hutchings and Cornelius. Whilst there, an application by Western National to increase fares appeared in Notices and Proceedings. It should be remembered that fares were calculated on a strict mileage basis, but WNOC were seeking to add a condition that allowed them to alter any fare for commercial reasons where running against another operator. Hutchings & Cornelius and WNOC ran in competition with each other on several sections of route, and the interpretation of this condition seemed to imply WNOC could charge whatever they liked against us, or of course any other competitor. Naturally we lodged an objection, and the application came up for hearing at Exeter. Accompanying H&C's general manager, Stanley Baker, and the indomitable Miss Gunn from Safeway Services, I attended the hearing. Western National were naturally represented by Geoffrey Jones and when the application was granted, but without the contentious condition, which was refused, I was over the moon - the little man could win!

The whole essence of bus and coach regulation is different now and, without a massive change in legislation, the fights in court between operators have disappeared and with them an eloquence that to me was mesmerising.

May I through *Newsletter* thank Geoffrey Jones not just for a splendid book but for stimulating in me a lifetime's interest in road traffic licensing.

David Grimmett

► AN OSTRICH INDUSTRY & THE DRIVERS LOT

Two contrasting items in *Newsletter* 46 caused one to reflect on personal experience of both passenger and goods sectors in the late '70s and early '80s. It was a pity to have missed John Dickson-Simpson's talk at the March meeting as it raised interesting issues. A great deal of the engineering prowess of the British commercial vehicle industry, Leyland in particular, began to be lost by both a decline in manufacturing quality and an almost death-wish inability to adapt to changing times or to listen to their customers. A great deal of the latter with Leyland was down to the sales emphasis on the nationalised and public sectors, regarded as virtually captive, ignoring that it would be the private sector who dictated what they wanted and who could, and ultimately did, look elsewhere. The oddity was the absolute adherence to the line taken by the transport Unions at that time: dashboards could not possibly be modified for any retrofitting of a tachograph at a later date; 'sleeper cabs' would never conceivably be an option for the British market.

The false leads followed in engine development are covered, and one recalls being ruefully told that the 680 would never 'take' a turbocharger without discharging oil from every pore - even the re-engineered TL11 was prone. Yet DAF had successfully applied one to what was, intrinsically, the same engine years earlier, also curing another British 'disease' - boiling in not always extreme conditions - with large bore plumbing. We supplied a 'Leopard' 12m coach for overseas work that did not cope well across Iran and Afghanistan. Ashok-Leyland in India

were far from complimentary about their British forbears and implanted a 'Worldmaster' size radiator. A high-powered technical discussion back home ensued, debating the merits of doing likewise with a second order and whether it would or would not cure the boiling problem. Probably not, but as the non-technical contributor, one could not resist pointing out that if one puts more water into a kettle it takes longer to boil!

JD-S mentions cab design and what an advance the 'Ergomatic' concept was. From an operator's point of view, perhaps, but it did nothing to advance the working environment for the driver, he in the main staying confined by the engine cowl. Leyland's last 'Great White Hope' prior to Roadtrain, the long heralded 'Marathon', that was going to counter foreign imports (day cab, of course) was always regarded as a sick joke. British Leyland in the 1970s appeared to have a death wish — soon to be fulfilled.

After finally turning away from coach sales and the passenger side one finished up in the freight sector, initially working as an agency HGV driver, which can involve the dregs of the industry. The anecdotes and experiences of that period - the early 1980s when the industry was yet in transition - may one day be written, but Ken Durston's reminiscences in *Newsletter 46*, of a slightly earlier era, can be empathized with. The transport cafes - the vast majority now gone - some good, a lot anything but; 'digs' compatible with the meagre 'night out' allowance; squalid and degrading. But the Union remained adamant that this was what their members aspired to, not a bunk in their vehicle that they could maintain to their own standards. Any motion to request an employer to provide sleeper cabs was vetoed. The 'dodgy night out' (where the driver probably exceeded the limits to park up nearer home than recorded, pocketing the allowance) must be preserved. A growing underclass, looking at the standard of vehicles being enjoyed by upper echelon drivers on long distance work, were beginning to question that philosophy.

An incident only a few years on perhaps brings these strands together. Returning from the continent, one had parked up at the delivery point in the evening, ready for a morning 'tip', in north Kent. Mid-winter, bitterly cold with a severe wind chill factor. The Mercedes cab, double-insulated, well sealed and with night heater, was comfortable enough to be in pants and vest; one cursed another driver who arrived later, parked alongside and kept his engine running for a long period. Come the morning and the other driver was found to be in a bad way, no exaggeration to say he was within an hour of hypothermia. Poorly equipped himself and with a British built Seddon that offered minimal insulation, characterised by poor door seals, he was lucky to survive. Drivers had had to endure 'tools' that suited their bosses' pockets for far too long; gradually their demands were heeded and equipment that better suited both sides became the norm, but it was to the detriment of the British manufacturing industry who had been so slow to face up to reality or anticipate the ground swell.

David J Bubier
June, 2006

► ASSUMPTIONS AT ROLLS ROYCE

May I relate the story of an interview in the 1970s, that was told to me by the interviewee? I hope that it is relevant to road transport history.

He was a friend of mine, Dennis Franklin, who initially worked for British Railways in London, but who had gravitated to the industrial Midlands, and to British Telecom, for a change of scene. For one reason or another, he later decided to go to Rolls Royce in Derby for another change. During the course of the interview, the following was put to him:

"You are going off on a cycle ride, day long. The weather is predicted generally fine, with a chance of light shower later. You will pass through no towns, but by mid-day should reach a country pub. It may be open, but this is not certain, and food of some sort may be available, but this early in the season. Hereafter the ride is by path and track, mainly signposted. It will be late when you return home, even if all goes well. Read me a list of all that you will take with you".

My friend compiled a lengthy verbal list of all manner of essentials as they came to mind, which the interviewer noted on paper. Some time was expended, after one or two halts when the interviewer asked if there were anything else, Dennis could think of nothing more. After a further check that he was certain of this, the interviewer perused the list in front of him.

"You are going on a cycle ride. Do you think you should take your bicycle with you?" It was not on the list. Dennis tried to laugh it off: "I assumed that I would have my cycle with me" he replied.

The interviewer leaned towards him, looking firmly, eye to eye: "Mr Franklin, at Rolls Royce we assume nothing" No offer of a position within RR was forthcoming.

Andy Axten

► BOOK NOTICE "THE BOX"

I refer to the Book Notice on "The Box" in *Newsletter 46* (p.21). I have a book entitled: "Piggy Back and Containers - a History of Rail Intermodal on America's Steel Highway", published in 1992.

While it concentrates on what their advent did to the railways and how they became expert in those fields, its starting point is 1884, when Long Island farmers' carts were loaded on to flat wagons to speed them to New York markets and keep the produce as fresh as possible.

It also includes photos, diagrams etc of many of the developments in road haulage and terminals - not all of them in the USA - that have paralleled the change to intermodal transport.

Perhaps even more coincidental is the author's name, David J de Boer, who lived in Walnut Creek, California, when it was published.

John Edser

► MEMORIES OF WEST SUFFOLK (Newsletter 46, p.3)

I was amused to read Peter Brown's recollection of removing chickens from the makeshift office belonging to Petch of Hopton (Memories of West Suffolk Part 2 Issue No. 46), Walter Petch who was a friend of my father's did indeed keep chickens (and pigs).

As a teenager I attended Diss Secondary Modern School and remember that Petch had one coach that brought in the pupils from the most western part of the catchment area. Back then Diss still had a thriving livestock market that was held every Friday, it was not unusual for Walter to transport the fowl and piglets purchased at the market back to Hopton in the boot of the coach on the Friday afternoon school home run.

Leigh Trevail

► SECOND HAND BUS DEALERS (Newsletter 46, pp.4-6)

Reading the article by John D. Howie brought to mind certain facts I found when researching the history of my local bus operators.

Three important events which took place in a short time span certainly had a marked influence on both the quantity and variety of vehicles available to the second hand market. Firstly, in 1928 when the change in legislation favoured the Railway Companies in switching from direct bus operation to investment in bus-operating concerns. Then in 1931, the implementation of the 1930 Road Traffic Act, followed in 1933 by the setting up of the London Passenger Transport Board.

Until the 1930 Act, my local territorial operator, the Thames Valley Traction Co. Ltd., was content to oust competition through a fares war or the use of 'chasers'. However, such activities were not appropriate after the Act, so buying out of rival concerns became a necessity; but the important thing to note is that it was only the controlling influence of the railways (principally the Great Western Railway) that caused the switch to 'chequebook diplomacy'. This led to significant numbers of vehicles being taken over, and these were often discarded in favour of fleet standardisation. In one instance, Thames Valley disposed of all 16 buses taken over from the Penn Bus Company straight away, even though the newest was only 4 months old! This process occurred with numerous other large territorial companies throughout the 1930s, adding to the stocks of the second hand dealers.

The formation of the LPTB speeded up the process in the Home Counties, adding yet further vehicles to the choice available to the discerning independent. During the 1930s it was sometimes even possible to buy whole batches of second hand vehicles still with many years' life in them. Charlie Durnford, the Engineer of Newbury & District Motor Services Ltd., a particularly interesting independent operating in west Berkshire, knew several dealers well and the Company certainly benefited from the above events. Charlie particularly favoured two dealers, G. Dawson of Clapham and H. Lane of Chelsea, each of whom could offer a wide choice. On those visits he took along several of his sons, selecting a number of vehicles

from the types favoured by N&D in that period, in some cases with four vehicles from the same original source. However, the major loss of market for new vehicles amongst the decimated ranks of the independents resulted in a number of chassis manufacturers going to the wall. That process was significant in providing a market for parts, for types no longer in production, which in itself created the dealer/breaker, some of whom specialised in particular makes of chassis.

Paul Lacey

► DELIVERING COAL AND COKE (Newsletter No.46.p.18)

The item on delivering coke by tipping it in the street reminded me of a passage in the book by Esther Cheo (English name) or Cheo Ying (Chinese name).^{*} She was born in 1932 in Shanghai from where her father came. Mother, however, was a Cockney chambermaid whom father had met when he was student at the London School of Economics.

Esther spent much of her childhood in England, initially in London, where at one stage she was in a Dr Barnado's home. Later, she was a wartime evacuee and was sent to the Black Country where she was fostered for short periods in various poor miners' homes before settling down and spending six years in the last such home. Precisely where this was she does not say, but she does mention that she "was a regular attender at chapel and sang solo at the Methodist anniversaries, where the congregation came to hear Mrs Colley's 'vacuee Chink'".

At age 17 Esther returned to China and, after a few years in the Army, she was employed by the English section of the newly-established Hsinhua (New China) News Agency.

At one stage she and her colleagues were required to take their turn in helping to build a dam to form a reservoir near the Ming Tombs, close to Beijing. Most of her colleagues had no previous experience of manual labour, but Esther writes: "My years in Dr Barnado's and Staffordshire, where coal shovelling was a weekly chore, made me a survivor ..." and "The digging was not too difficult. It was no harder than removing the pile of coal dumped in front of our 'entrance' in Staffordshire and carrying a bucket in each hand to the back coal shed". Presumably delivering coal to terraced houses, unless there was some means of accessing the backs of the properties, could only be done by dumping it outside the front door. Then, of course, in some industrial towns there were back-to-back houses which did not have a back door. Where did the inhabitants keep their coal in such residences?

* Esther Cheo Ying, *Black Country girl in Red China*, Hutchinson, London, 1980

E Keith Lloyd

Two books have been received from Venture Publications for review. Both will be reviewed in Newsletter 48. "Northern Counties of Wigan" and "Lancashire United".

Editorial

Newsletter tries to embrace a wide variety of subjects. Last issue, No.46, clearly did so – on the evidence of the number of Letters published in this issue that arose from it. If you thought one particular item in No.46 was an unmerited use of space, just look at the Letters; there is quite a chance that your ‘dull’ item has been pounced upon by some other reader who, delighted by it, has contributed further to that subject.

This issue again hopes to offer something for a good many tastes – flying busmen, hitchhiking, horse-drawn coal

delivery and the remarkable extent of the transport organisation developed by Dunlop's as early as 1919 – contrasting with the pace of life in 1921 demonstrated on our front page. It hopefully also offers food for further research or discussion on the segregation (or interchangeability) of labour, the role of the War Department in early bus (and motor lorry?) development and when, and who financed, the first bus services for colliers. Your Editor thanks contributors very much; and invites still more.

Book Reviews

75 YEARS OF THE TRAFFIC COMMISSIONERS.

The above words represent part of the title of Geoffrey Jones' remarkable new publication, the remainder of the title reading "A lawyer's personal view" and the words "personal view" apply equally to this reviewer's comments on the 116 pages of content.

Here I must say that I came to meet Geoffrey on numerous occasions in the past, across the floor of the Traffic Courts when I was endeavouring to promote some nifty scheme to enhance the interests of my then municipal undertaking; and he was doing his best to negate my efforts on behalf of the opposition and especially so during the period, which he touches upon in his book, when the Principals of the National Bus Company or of Midland Fox and Leicester City Transport could never be said to have formed a mutual admiration society. With his detailed traffic court knowledge Geoffrey was rather more than just a worthy opponent, and here the basis of that knowledge is set out for us to easily assimilate.

A book dealing with legal matters, and written by a lawyer can be expected to be dry and written in legalistic jargon, but here is an exception to the rule, for it is succinct, factual, and in parts funnier than one might ever expect. As an example read the piece on page 75 about the workers' bus with the gas fired heating.

Geoffrey covers the chaos that existed prior to the passing of the 1930 Road Traffic Act, the reasons behind its introduction, the setting up of the various Traffic Areas and the significant importance of the appointment of the initial Traffic Commissioners with their wide-spread responsibilities, covering such things as road service licences, vehicle condition, driver and conductor licensing, control of fares, and the holding of public sittings, as just some parts of their wide remit. He also comments on the personalities of these important first office holders, the way in which they set about coping with their then unique tasks and the humour that lurked behind their 'impenetrable faces' as presented to the public; humour that off times came to surface in their annual reports. Their introduction was not though, without some adverse comment. One school of thought was of the opinion that road service licensing ossified the industry, creating by the end of the first two or three years a form of status quo that stifled possible future operator enterprise, whilst another felt that during the same period too much emphasis was given to protecting the welfare of the established operator

which perchance in many instances was only fair. Geoffrey shows how the Commissioners always endeavoured to ensure that the welfare of the travelling public was paramount.

Your reviewer has had some 65 years in the transport industry, and knows of no other easily accessible exposition that covers the subject so admirably for a cover price of just £9.50, a book that brings the reader right up to date by detailing the most recent legislation, and the changes this has wrought on both the responsibilities of the Commissioners and the ongoing effects on operators and their operations.

This is a publication that should be read by all those interested in the doings of the bus industry, and how it came to exist in its present form goods vehicle legislation is also covered ... I am delighted to have had the opportunity to produce this review and I heartily congratulate my old adversary, but current friend, on what is undoubtedly a remarkable achievement.

I commend it to all your readers.

Geoffrey Hilditch

OLD BUSES

David Kaye; Shire Publishing;
ISBN 1 900515 30 X; 8¼"x6" softback; 56 pages;
21 b/w and 60 colour pictures; £5.99

David Kaye has updated his 1982 account of the development of the British motor bus. The book has Sections brought forward from the first edition covering the horse era, the Edwardian age, the period of the pirates, regulation and reorganisation in the 1930s, the Second World War and its aftermath, plus an additional Section added for the period from 1950 to date. As before, it has suggestions for further reading. An index is a useful addition.

Of the 48 black and white photographs in the first edition 21 have been retained. 60 colour photographs are added, making for a much brighter looking book, although reproduction of the colour photographs in many cases is not as good as it might have been.

I find the book personally interesting on two counts. First, David is a Sussex man like myself, and he refers often to that most superior operator, Southdown Motor Services Ltd, with no fewer than eight pictures of vehicles from that fleet.

Secondly, as a long-term Lincolnshire resident, former member of the Lincolnshire Vintage Vehicle Society and a continuing contributor to the Lincolnshire and East Yorkshire Transport Review, David has put in a good many pictures of vehicles in Lincolnshire, including a number of views at Sandtoft and six from the Lincolnshire Road Transport Museum all taken several years ago. I also recognize Halifax Albion Nimbus RJX 250, a one-time resident of Glentham and last seen by me in Lincoln in 2003 when it had just failed an MOT. Does anyone know where it is today?

I like the colour pictures because many of them are now themselves history. But some of the captions are a bit misleading, seemingly from over-compression. For example, the caption for Lincoln City Transport No 23 (Guy Arab III, DFE 383) could be read as implying it had a Ruston & Hornsby engine from new, while my Southdown 677 is described as relaunching the Worthing to Victoria express service in 1946, contrary to my understanding that the Southdown express services were restarted after the war using the pre-war Tigers – certainly 677 did not arrive in Sussex until April 1947. The acknowledgements are also slightly adrift, my wife Joyce being credited with a photo of Birmingham Daimler CVD6, GOE 486 on page 35, rather

than the one of 677. There are also some statements in the text that differ from my own understanding.

But I have yet to review a book that contained no errors or ambiguities. To put these in perspective, *Old Buses* provides a wide-ranging potted history of the development of the British bus from earliest days until the end of the 20th century, up to various events leading to the decline of a substantial part of the British bus manufacturing industry in the 1980s.

The book has the feel of being written by an enthusiast for enthusiasts. As such it majors on the vehicles themselves, though it does not ignore operating conditions, social changes, Government and local authority policies, legislation and other influences. There is a useful list of collections to visit and a summary of the four main means of experiencing old buses: static rallies, road runs, running days and heritage services. Maybe I might suggest a couple more: owning a vintage bus, and helping to run a transport museum.

I have enjoyed reading the book. It is both a good source of information for those who don't already know the subject well and a convenient aide memoire for those who do.

Paul Jefford

Book Notice

A HISTORICAL GUIDE TO HORSESHOE COACHES LTD from the 1920s to the 1990s
David Rutter; The author 2005 [v] ± 58pp illus £11.25

This is an interesting story of a Tottenham, north London coach firm, which suffered twice, the second time fatally, from putting too many of its eggs into one basket. During the Second World War the company was given the chance to set up a second depot at Kempston, Bedfordshire, so that it could undertake works transport for the Marston Valley Brick Co. This work, supplemented by other operations in and from the area, was successful for several decades, so that its cessation in 1981 was a major blow to Horseshoe. Then two years later (after a spate of mechanical problems) it again placed considerable reliance on a single contract, this time in London, with the Japan Travel Bureau, to operate daily sightseeing tours of London, throughout the year. This work grew to provide over 50% of Horseshoe's revenue and to make heavy demands on vehicle and staff provision; in 1990-1 external factors, such as the weather, the outbreak of the Gulf War and the general economic downturn, resulted in the

liquidators being called in, to start a process which lasted for five years.

Before this sad ending, Horseshoe had been built up into a modest group, with some 45 vehicles in 1952. It acquired Lee's Luxury Coaches of Barnet, North London (Champion) Coaches, Knowlers Coaches, Modern Super Coaches of Enfield, and R J Jones, and Henry Coaches, which, like Horseshoe, were Tottenham-based. These acquisitions had extended the catchment area of Horseshoe and brought in valuable excursion licences. There are numerous photographs of coaches operated, though the reviewer would have welcomed more of earlier vehicles and fewer of premises (which include four booking office views). The Horseshoe fleet and those of its acquisitions, which included Gilford and Toyota midi-coaches and Gurney Nutting and Thurgood bodies, would have made even incomplete fleet lists welcome. In short, what is good in terms of a company history could have been better. This is especially the case in terms of spelling, sentence construction and the ever-intrusive "it's" for "its".

Richard Storey

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

Tony Newman reports one of the replies resulting from his trawl of Local History Societies:

[One of our books] is called *All Our Yesterdays*, and Article 9 is an interview with the grandson of Mr. Joseph Clark, who started a coach-building business at Staple Hill, Bristol at the end of the 19th century. The article includes two photos, one showing the stand at the Royal Agricultural Show, Bristol 1913 and the other,

possibly the first ice cream van on a motor chassis in Bristol in 1928.

If you would like a copy of the book, it costs £5.00 + £1.50 p&p, (cheque made out to Downend Folk House Association) and is available from The Hon Secretary, Downend Local History Society, Lincombe Barn, Overndale Road, Downend, Bristol BS16 2RW

A Well Thumbed History ~ Hitch-Hiking in the 1960's

DAVID STEWART-DAVID FCILT

The evidence supporting this narrative is recorded in an art nouveau note book with black leatherette covers and gilt edged pages. It carries the cursive gold inscription "Hikers Notes". To judge from its style the book dates from 1910, and when I came by it in 1960, the pages were unused. I was given it for looking after the stall next to my mother's in Shepherd's Bush Market for half an hour or so. I used it to log the trips I made hitch-hiking between January 1961 and September 1962. At that time the key locations in my travels were Hull University campus in the north west of the city; Ferens Hall of Residence in Cottingham; my mother's house in Kingston on Thames - which in those days was an artisan's dwelling bought for £1800 in 1959; my girl friend's house on Huddersfield Road in Barnsley;* and the homes of some other friends from university. My grandparents lived in Peterborough, so this featured as a stopping place on some of the trips from Hull to Kingston. I had done a couple of hitch-hiking trips before I became a student. I had escaped conscription by a few months but participation in the school cadet force was mandatory, so twice I used RAF uniform to escape training camps at Thorney Island and South Cerney. In both cases my destinations had been railway branch line junctions - at Havant and Kemble. I travelled both to Hayling Island and Cirencester but these were rail journeys. At Hull many of my fellow students had been National Servicemen, and they gave me hints and tips about hitch-hiking - and much else. In this era there were in total fewer than 1500 students at Hull University, of whom 86% were male. Only a very small minority hitch-hiked and those who did generally covered shorter distances because most undergraduates lived within 100 miles radius of Hull. The era of my hitch-hiking was that in which the British electorate were told by Harold Macmillan that "they had never had it so good". This was evident from low unemployment, even in East Yorkshire, a rapid rise in car ownership, and a considerable increase in the number of lorry journeys. Increasing lorry use was not only because rail was deservedly losing market share freight traffic to road, but also because the movement of consumer goods was increasing rapidly, and with it the number of retail delivery journeys. As I was to discover, most car owners were middle class, (although a surprising proportion of lift givers were from social class "A") and lorry drivers were unequivocally working class, even those who were owner drivers. Many professional drivers had learnt to drive in the Forces, where giving of lifts was normal and well established. In fact, short distance hitch-hiking in Britain had certainly existed during the First World War; for example it was then commonplace for soldiers arriving at Newcastle Central to thumb a lift with goods vehicles - many of them hauled by mules - which were en route from New Bridge Street railway goods depot to Fenham Barracks. I have evidence of this both from a Geordie infantryman who hitched lifts and from my grandfather who drove an army mule cart in Newcastle after being wounded in battle, and gave lifts for the enjoyment of company. During and after the

Second World War the practice of thumbing lifts in Europe grew very rapidly.

In 1961 there were still more servicemen in Britain than students, and most drivers had experienced a time when they had been in need of a lift. Motorways were in their infancy. The Doncaster by-pass was under construction during my time as a student, and the A1 still wound its way through Stamford until my second year of hitching. The advent of motorways made hitch-hiking more difficult, because few drivers were willing to pull onto the hard shoulder even on slip roads, and often the exit junction for a town was an awkward distance from the place itself, with no bus service. Slow roads made it easy to hitch, not least because driving something like a drop-side Albion with a flat-out speed of 40 mph was evidently tedious. British Road Services and many own-account operators prohibited drivers from picking up hitch-hikers, but quite often I would get a lift in Bawtry or Thorne with a BRS driver heading for Hull who was obviously sleepy. I soon learnt the art of conversation in competition with a five cylinder Gardener, and my genuine interest in the work and life of a lorry driver was appreciated, and useful in my sociology studies.

During the period I logged my hitch-hiking, I obtained 211 lifts. Of these 113 were in cars (including three in Rolls Royces), 41 in rigid lorries, 28 in vans of less than 2.5 tons gross vehicle weight, 13 in larger vans, 10 in articulated lorries and six in or on other types of vehicle, such as farm tractors and motor cycles. My objective in hitch-hiking was strictly utilitarian - to get to a place close to my destination cheaply. I would add that all of my journeys from Hull to Kingston and vice versa were achieved more quickly than could have been done using the scheduled East Yorkshire coach service to Victoria. I never failed to reach my destination even though the logs show that I sometimes hitched after dark, usually at the start of the "Easting" leg from the A1 to Hull. This could start at Bawtry, Doncaster or Thorne, depending on the route of the northbound driver. Mostly I hitched alone, but I did one return trip to a conference at the London School of Economics with a woman student from my course, and I hitched from Hull to Lands End and back in the summer of 1962 on a holiday tour with my girl friend. The following log shows a typical journey - neither fast nor slow - from Richmond on Thames to Cottingham.

June 29 1961 Richmond to Cottingham (220 miles)

Weather: Hot and dry.

Departed Richmond at 13.05 after a long morning shift as a kitchen porter. (J Lyons and Co)

Arrived Ferens 20.45

London Underground, Richmond to High Barnet, start point of hitch-hiking. Wait High Barnet 10 minute then Commer drop side lorry to Bignall's Corner. Wait Bignall's Corner 5 minutes then Bedford 3.5 ton van to Hatfield. Wait Hatfield 2 minutes then BMC low side lorry to Norman Cross, where driver turned off A1 heading to Oundle. Found a shop near Norman Cross (this was probably in Stilton) bought a soft drink then: Wait 10 min near Norman Cross for next lift, Bentley saloon c.1955

* The girl friend was also a student at Hull. We have now been married for 43 years.

build to Newark. Driver of this car bought me tea and a bun at Newark, and dropped me at roundabout on north edge of town.

Wait 14 min then Bedford "Luton" van ("Robbicans") working empty, to Airmyn. At Airmyn lift straight away in Dodge normal control flat bed lorry going to East Hull, but driver detoured to drop me in Cottingham at 20.42. Three minutes walk to Ferens Hall arrive 20.45

At that time I had sufficient knowledge of cars and goods vehicles to know approximately what type of vehicle had stopped for me, although this was the era just before year registrations were first used, in 1963, so I made a guess at the vintage of the vehicle used. This mattered, as at that time many of the Minis which had just come on the market, had been badge engineered as Austin 7s; but I also got at least one lift in a pre war Austin 7, a very different kind of vehicle. Unfortunately I did not generally record the owners of commercial vehicles, but the roll call of types makes interesting reading. They include an AEC pantechnicon, a Trojan van, Morris Commercials, several Guy Otters and a host of Thames Traders and Bedfords. I did note that I got a lift in a green Morris Minor van run by GPO telephones, and a Bedford Artic tanker hauling an Esso tank. Whether this petrol delivery was an own-account operation or contract hire I do not know, but either way I suspect that the driver was breaking regulations in giving me a lift. The car drivers who offered lifts were predominantly middle class men, but a woman driver in a Citroen Light 15 took me on a hair raising ride in the wrong direction (for her as well as me), and ended up, appropriately enough, at Colney Hatch. Often I asked to be dropped on the edge of a town, which lorry drivers well understood, but car drivers sometimes found a puzzle. It was in fact far more convenient to hitch from a roundabout just south of (say) Doncaster - even when heading east - than to be dropped at the town centre.

I stopped hitch-hiking as a regular mode of travel in September 1962 for two reasons. The first was that my mother won the star prize on the Michael Miles television quiz "Take Your Pick". This was a Lambretta 150cc which I was given as a 21st birthday present on condition that I found the means to pay for its upkeep. This I did by free-lancing for the Hull Daily Mail and the Yorkshire Post, but these activities kept me in Hull at week-ends, as well as having a bad effect on my class of degree, although not on my employment prospects. Immediately after graduation

I, and my fiancée, started working for British Railways, and so gained Privilege travel at quarter rate. After graduation I did two more hitch-hiking journeys. The first was from the site of a railway accident at Wem in Shropshire in 1965. At about 21.30 we had achieved "Normal Working Resumed" but the breakdown gang (but not me) stood to gain a deal of extra pay if they did not return to Crewe North before midnight. The "officer in charge" said I could go home if I could find my way, otherwise I could return to the breakdown van and join the game of cards. By sheer good fortune I got a lift - at night, on an unlit road - within 5 minutes and this took me to within a mile of my flat in the Potteries. My hitch-hiking finale was at the age of 29 when I was married and a house-holder beset by inflation. We ran a dodgy Morris Minor, and I had to go to a family funeral in London. A return ticket by train was horrifyingly expensive, so I hitched from the Tyne Tunnel to London in a dark suit and black tie, and did the journey to the cemetery in South London in two lifts. From 1972 there followed a decade of offering lifts, until the hitch-hiker became a rare species, killed by motorways, Student Railcards and fear of strangers. In this context it is worth mentioning that the notorious A6 murder in 1961 took place during the era in which I was hitch-hiking. It seemed to make no difference to my ability to obtain a lift from drivers of cars or lorries. Of course hitch-hiking was unpredictable, and sometimes uncomfortable. But even then I found it fascinating, and I was often cheered by the kindness of strangers. I never got a lift with anyone I knew, except on a trip from Norman Cross to Cambridge, made in a Hillman Minx with a man I felt sure was John Betjeman - and that was before we started a discussion about the joys of Victorian Railway stations.

This paper is a memoir. Whilst I was writing it I did some research into hitch-hiking which is in course of preparation as an academic paper. As part of my research I e-mailed ten people born between 1936 and 1946 about their hitch-hiking experience. Most had hitch-hiked, for utilitarian reasons, although one respondent admitted that she went hitch-hiking with her girl friend "for adventure". Almost the only hitch hikers I have seen in Britain in recent years have been delivery drivers with trade plates and young people who have turned out to be students from Poland and Hungary, where hitch-hiking has an altogether different history, as I shall explain, some other time.

The spectral tram

The slant on municipal matters in the R&RTHA's 2006 Conference programme (pages 9-10) brought to mind the *Daily Telegraph's* Peter Simple column and the late Michael Wharton's wonderful creations. His best known character must be Alderman Jabez Foodbotham, the immortal chairman of Bradford's Fine Arts and Tramways Committee. By turns, awesome-jowled, crag-visaged and grim-booted, Foodbotham was the *sine qua non* of municipal power.



From *The Stretchford Chronicles ~ 25 Years of Peter Simple* (Macmillan, 1981):

"There is an old prophecy in Bradford that at a time of supreme peril for the city, the 22-stone, iron-watch-chained, indigo-waistcoated Alderman Foodbotham will awake from his age-long sleep in a cave in Northowram, and ride forth in a spectral tram to save his people."

David Harman

From "The Commercial Motor" June 1919
(Found and submitted to Newsletter by Derek S Giles)

DUNLOP'S TRANSPORT ORGANIZATION

Over 100 Commercial Vehicles Used at Birmingham Depot for Delivery, Passenger-service and Tyre-testing Purposes

WE do not claim that the following description is complete, although it is certainly an unvarnished story, of the methods by which the Dunlop Rubber Co's raw materials and finished goods are carried from station to factory and from factory to store or depot. The outstanding features only, of a large and diversified organization, are dwelt upon. At the moment both the transport department and the huge organization it serves are in the transition period, the latter from a state of war to one of peace-time working, the former is preparing for move to new and commodious quarters.

The magnitude of this transport department may be gathered from the fact that the Birmingham depot comprises over 100 vehicles of all sorts and sizes, and although it is the headquarters it is, notwithstanding, only one of fourteen such depots disposed in the principal cities of the kingdom. Its diversity is principally demonstrated by the variety of types of vehicle employed, from the four-ton petrol and four-ton electric lorries down to light cars; that it comprises a practically continuously operated bus service employing 32 buses, goods carrying vehicles of like number, the balance being made up of touring cars, the principal occupation which is that of continuously testing Dunlop tyres. Incidentally, it should be mentioned that 15 per cent of the total of 100 odd vehicles at Birmingham are maintained as stand-by or spare chassis in case of breakdown of any of the regular services. The passenger-carrying side of the department appears naturally to demand priority of attention. The company's principal factory now is that named Fort Dunlop, which is situated east of Gravelly Hill and north of Stechford, its distance from New Street as the crow flies being four miles. To it there is no reasonable service of buses, trams or trains. This factory and the lack of public-service connections between it and the city and its environments is, then, the *raison d'être* of Dunlop's passenger service. Thirty-two vehicles are employed upon this work, mainly old London General Omnibus Co vehicles of Straker-Squire make. There are included also ten buses hired from the Birmingham Corporation and four from the Walsall Corporation.

As may be expected, the highest degree of perfected organization on lines of economical running is not attainable in connection with this section of the department by reason of its irregularity. The works staff proper is employed on three shifts, eight hours each, from seven in the morning to three in the afternoon, from 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. and 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. again. Effective provision has to be made then on three separate occasions during each 24 hours for conveying workpeople between home and the factory. This naturally involves the company in the expense of providing a large number of vehicles sufficient to accommodate at each shift one-third of its staff of workpeople, and these times provide what may be described as the "peak" hours of the service.

Furthermore, however, owing to the fact that the works is still largely in process of construction, and that there are builders' and contractors' staff employed about the place who do not cease or start work at any of the times named, additional demands upon the passenger service, although not individually so large as those from Dunlop's own staff, are made at various times during the day. Many suggestions have been put forward with a view to eliminating the uneconomical effect of these peak loads, and short of keeping employed a number of chassis with interchangeable bodies, the best expedient seems to be that which is employed to the extent of four units – for using as passenger vehicles goods lorries into which seats are quickly, although, of course, securely, dropped, merely for the rush hours.

An interesting detail of the service is the provision of a special enclosed bus, on an Austin chassis, for the use of officials who from time to time during the day may wish to run from one the company's factories to another. The bus runs to time-table and the service is so frequent that no inconvenience would be caused by anyone wishing to travel, say, from Fort Dunlop to Aston Cross by his having to wait for the next service rather than call upon a car for immediate use. Fares are charged to the workpeople in connection with this service. These, however, are very low indeed, and work out at rather less than 1d a mile. In one instance, a 31 mile journey costs the passenger only 11d.

The goods department is mainly devoted to bringing raw materials from stations and docks to the principal factories, conveying partly-finished goods from one factory to another, and finished tyres from stores and depots into the town. In several instances successful endeavours to cope with the bogey of empty running have been made. Journeys are planned to follow triangular routes, picking up and loading at each of three important places of call. For example, one triangular circuit of a length of three miles is continuously operated by wagons which are always loaded. It runs between Para or Aston Mills, Manor Mills and Fort Dunlop. Raw material as it arrives in Birmingham, is generally diverted to Fort Dunlop. It is collected there by wagons engaged on this triangular circuit and taken either to Manor Mills or Aston Cross, and is there delivered, the lorry taking on a load of partly-finished tyres of some kind from one of the two minor factories, conveying it to the other, where a bulk load of raw material after it has been mixed (a preliminary stage of rubber making) is taken on and conveyed back to Fort Dunlop.

Another triangular route is in connection with the steel for foundation bands of solid tyres. Raw material for these, as in the case of rubber, is taken direct to Fort Dunlop, where it is cut to length. The company's own motors collect these cut lengths and take them in complete lorry loads to the works in Smethwick, where they are bent and welded. The second limb of the triangle is between this smithy and a works in town where the bands are machined, and the third journey is from the machine shop back to Fort Dunlop, conveying finished steel bands upon which, at Fort Dunlop, the tyres are finally built up and vulcanized. To give some ideas of the extent of the operations at Fort Dunlop, it is pointed out that this service is continuously run throughout each day by two four-ton vehicles. One of them when finishing for the evening puts up at the garage with its load of whatever it may at the moment be carrying; the other one finishes its

goods circuit at Fort Dunlop, is there fitted with forms and is temporarily incorporated in the passenger-carrying fleet.

Yet another vehicle does the transport service for the Coventry works, running to that town each morning with a load of tyres for dispatch from the Government Overseas Stores, which is situated in Coventry. During the day it runs continuously between Coventry works and the station, finally returning at night with a load of tyre valves and similar components. Another service of interest, and which illustrates how trailers may advantageously be employed, is in connection with certain Government orders which involve the transport of 15,000 tyres per week over a two mile journey. For this purpose two four-ton Hallfords and six two-ton two-wheeled trailers are employed. The principle of working in connection with each lorry being that while a trailer at each end of the journey is being loaded or unloaded a third one is being towed by the lorry, which itself on the outward journey is also filled to capacity.

Another journey between factory and station is run by two four-tonners, one a petrol and the other electric. The distance is three miles direct run, and one would have imagined that such a short run would have given results favourable to the electric. Such, however, is not the case, the latter vehicle failing owing to its lower speed capacity. The petrol vehicle does 15 journeys per day, 17 minutes occupied travelling and a quarter of an hour for loading and unloading each journey, which indicates sufficient organization at both ends for that work. The electric, on the other hand, occupies 26 minutes on the journey, so that its total journeys is only 11, with a little bit to spare, and apparently the saving on cost by the use of an electric is more than outweighed by the lack of economy resulting from the loss of four journeys per day.

The whole fleet, it will be noted, is miscellaneous, both

as to types and to makes of chassis employed. The variation in type will naturally not be capable of much improvement, as not only do the varying loads call for different sizes of chassis, if economical transport is to be considered, but a not inconsiderable portion of the fleet is devoted entirely to actual tyre testing. That is, it is not considered sufficient merely to stick tyres on a chassis and let it run in the course of ordinary service, noting its performance; such a process would be too slow. Special test tyres are fitted to a vehicle and it is then run to the fullest extent possible during each and every day until the tyre is destroyed or until the objects of their experimental department have been achieved. As regards makes of vehicle, the advantages of organization of having all the machines of one capacity of the same make have not been overlooked. It is intended in the future, as replacements become necessary, to adhere, as far as possible, to one make, at least in each town, and although we were not definitely informed as to the company's intentions on this point, the recent purchase of a new Dennis may possibly indicate the intention to collect a fleet of that make of chassis for use in the Birmingham district.

Footnote: The working party of the Editorial Group who are hard at work on the "Passenger Companion" – the intended follow-up volume to the *Companion to British Road Haulage History* – would be seriously interested to hear from any member who has information on early colliery bus services – when and where they started, who paid for them, or any practical details about them. The Editor of the "Passenger Companion" is Dr. Corinne Mulley, Transport Operations Research Group, Claremont Tower, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU. E-mail: corrine.mulley@ncl.ac.uk

The Gentle Art of Motoring

Extracts from a pamphlet published by Chiswick Press in 1905

A copy was seen at St. Deiniols Library, Hawarden, Flintshire.

From the title, it might be assumed that the content would include eulogies of motoring from the viewpoint of the motor car owner. But instead, it is much more critical of the behaviour of motorists and suggests the application of more thought for others and responsibility on the part of drivers.

The pamphlet notes: "... many houses alongside public roads have been rendered almost uninhabitable..... by inconveniences which follow from improper use of the mode of conveyance [the motor car]".

As a means to keep the dust nuisance down, the use of a product known as 'Westrumite' is recommended. Can any reader identify this material?

A Mr. Burdett Coutts is quoted as saying "Look at the great majority of these hideous machines which cost

£1,000 to £2,000 a piece and go 50 mph along our roads, scattering death and destruction and terror and inconvenience among the humbler users of the highway. What are the names on them? Panhard, Daimler, Mors, Mercedes, Peugeot; they are all foreigners!"

The pamphlet includes a list of eight proposals for adoption in order to improve the situation.

1. A speed limit of 14 mph
2. Severe penalties for breaking the law
3. Penalty for raising dust in the vicinity of dwelling houses
4. The onus to be on the driver involved in an accident to show the fault was not his
5. Licenses to drive to be issued only after passing tests of efficiency.
6. [Head] Lights to be limited to 80 candlepower
7. Competitions to be prohibited on roads
8. A Register of car numbers, owner's name and address to be kept at a central office which is open to public inspection for a small fee.

*Noted by A.G. Newman
April 2006*

Coal Delivery Problems and Memories

A letter from Dr E Keith Lloyd, elsewhere in this issue, raises interesting points regarding household and institutional coal delivery. For the majority of houses, coal is now a thing of the distant past; though perhaps not wholly beyond the memory of some of our members. Indeed, from the period of my early childhood, coal delivery has left two clear memories. Both are concerned with Glasgow and are inter-connected. (It is coincidental that the coke delivery picture in *Newsletter 46*, which prompted Keith Lloyd's letter, was also in Glasgow).

We lived in Glasgow for most of 1932 and the whole of 1933. Our rented flat was the ground floor of a large, tall mid-terrace tenement nearly at the top of Gibson Street, Hillhead.* Gibson Street is a steep street, climbing from the River Kelvin to the transverse Hillhead Street at the top. The University trams from the city terminated at the foot of Gibson Street, and immediately on one's right, one had the railway line to Kelvinbridge Station emerging from a tunnel. The station registers not at all in my memory, but the sidings and coal yard complementary to it will always convey the mixed smell of horses and coal that assailed me when we got off the tram. Coal delivery from that yard at that date seems to have been entirely horse-drawn. (Was this still true in inner London in 1933, or was a north-south divide, with a motorised south-east, already manifest?)

Coal deliveries in Gibson Street presented an immediate problem. There were no routes that could easily be followed that would give a horse emerging from the yard, right down at river level, with a fully-loaded cart for deliveries in Hillhead, a gentle gradient. Yet, as we walked up from the tram, I remember my mother verbally belabouring a coalman who was beating his horse straining to pull its huge load (wagon and scales weighing

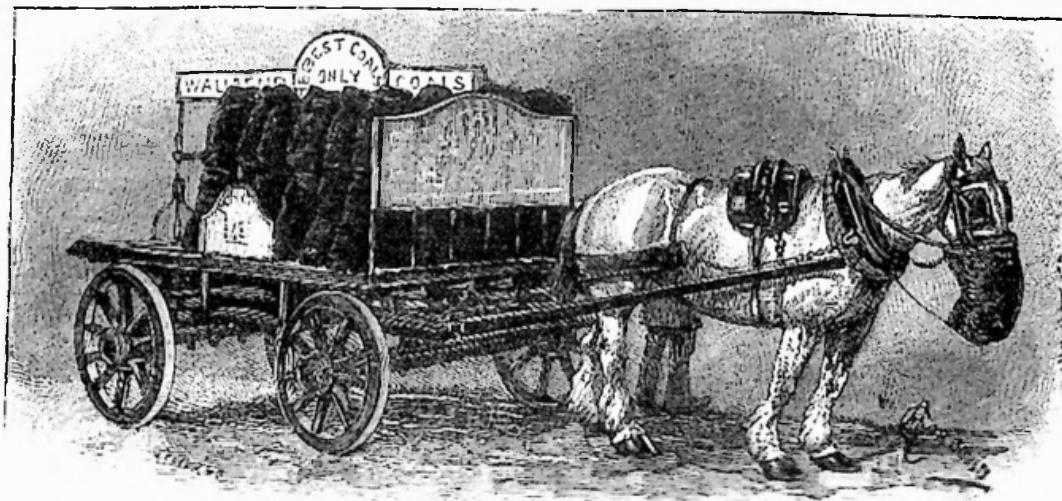
one ton + 30 cwt. of coal, perhaps) up Gibson Street. I remember her threatening to call the RSPCA, and the coalman not knowing what to do, with the cart already on the steep hill, a horse too exhausted to hold it, let alone to pull it further, and this lady saying she would call the RSPCA.

Coal carts did get up Gibson Street – Heaven knows how – and coal was delivered to our house. The coal man – one man alone, I seem to remember – then carried, say, half a dozen hundredweight sacks of coal up the four or five steps to our front door and into the house where there was a wooden coal bunker at right angles to the bath. The bath was presumably an addition after the house was built. We did not keep coal in the bath; but only inches from it.

Our skivvy, Molly Irwin, had to keep me from getting under the feet of the coalman; and when he had gone, she had an almighty job sweeping up the settling coal dust. Do not pity young Molly, nor the coalman; they had work and wages. Molly was the sole support of her parents, her brothers and her sisters. At a tender age in Glasgow, I was learning about trams, about coal delivery and about being a privileged child in a city of unemployment.

RA

* Gibson Street seems now to be a wee bit more gentrified than it was in 1933 – see internet for range of restaurants and for tenement flats letting at £850 per calendar month. I doubt that we paid more than 10/- per week rent in 1933; 12/6d at the most, even for a flat with bath.



The illustration is from London forty years earlier. It is taken from "The Horse World of London" (The Religious Tract Society, 1893), also resorted to in Newsletter No.37 (front page).