

Newsletter

ISSN 1750-9408

No.48
December 2006

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Police Constable Ben Smith of the West Riding Constabulary on patrol in the Slaidburn area – probably in the 1950s. Readers may note the then typical features of the bell on the bicycle, the cape over his left shoulder, and Constable Smith's watchful eye.

Slaidburn, now in Lancashire, lay in the West Riding of Yorkshire until

local government reorganisation in April 1974.

The area has previously been visited in *Newsletter No.45* in an article on "Ammunition Dumps".

The photograph is reproduced by kind permission of Mr Bill Smith of Saughall, Chester and of the Slaidburn Heritage Centre

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Sir Henry Percy Maybury, GBE, KCMG, CB

DAVE BUBIER

Whether one's reading embraces the development of the arterial road network in the 1920s and 30s, traffic management schemes in diverse cities, the formative years of the London Passenger Transport Board, the background to the 1930 Road Traffic Act, or even the development of civil aviation, it is likely that the name of Sir Henry Maybury will have been encountered. Clearly a towering figure in transport-related governmental circles during the inter-war period, chairing numerous transport-related public enquiries, influential and very much regarded as an expert in his field. But who he was, as a man, and his background, are far less well known, and there appears to have been no previous attempt to bring them together in a biographical appraisal of one who proves to be a quite remarkable and energetic character. Emerging from quite modest beginnings he achieved almost dizzy heights, seemingly through an ability to adapt his wide experience to changing times, able to converse on all levels; a practical civil engineer who could deliver solutions. The following is necessarily a brief account of his life and career ¹.

Henry Percy Maybury (HPM) was born, it is understood, on Christmas Day 1864, the third of four brothers, at Uffington, on the outskirts of Shrewsbury. The Maybury clan was fairly widespread along the Severn Valley and are thought originally to have migrated from the Weald of Kent as ironworkers in the earliest stages of the Industrial revolution. His father, Charles Maybury, declared himself a 'Warehouseman', age 26, of Ditherington (another Shrewsbury suburb) when marrying Jane Matthews (age 25) in 1854, a profession also ascribed to his father, John, who had died in 1840. That son had followed father might suggest a modest degree of status in whatever line of warehousing was involved, perhaps a foreman/manager, i.e. minor 'trade' class. However, by the 1871 Census, Charles was recorded at Uffington merely as a 'labourer'.

Education for HPM was at nearby Upton Magna School and as a younger son it must be assumed he showed some particular aptitude to have been found an apprenticeship in civil engineering, in itself quite an achievement for the family. His siblings did not subsequently progress in life with quite his degree of success: an elder brother (Charles) spent his entire career as a 'bricklayer' (more probably an 'own account' builder), as did his son, at Forden, near Welshpool, whilst the younger (Robert) had become a 'domestic coachman' at Wolverhampton by 1901, having started out in railway service. Robert was still at home with his mother at the time of the 1881 census, father Charles having seemingly died and widow Jane eking a living as a 'charwoman'. About 1878 HPM had commenced his training in the offices of Robert E Johnson, Divisional Civil Engineer for the London & North Western and Great Western Railway Joint Board at Shrewsbury. These lines were the Birkenhead Joint, Shrewsbury & Hereford, Shrewsbury & Wellington, Shrewsbury and Welshpool and Wrexham & Minera Joint, although Johnson, an L&NWR man, was possibly mainly based at Birkenhead. Field work for the apprentice could have been wide ranging and it seems likely HPM gained valuable

experience on construction projects prior to his first career move, after five years, to a Ludlow based public works contractor.

It has not been possible to identify this Ludlow contractor by whom HPM was employed with certainty, but he was said to have progressed to manager during almost ten years there and to have had charge of large rail, road, sewer, gas and waterworks contracts covering a wide area. During this period he married, in 1885, Elizabeth Sheldon, daughter of a Ludlow hotel and public house owning family, two sons and a daughter being born there; but by 1891 the family were residing at Ruabon Road, Wrexham, HPM describing himself as a 'Railway Constructors Agent'.

At age 27 and with a seemingly sound career base, HPM decided in 1892 to enter into municipal service, accepting the post of Engineer & Surveyor to the Ffestiniog Local Board, having charge of all departments, including gas and water. After three years his next progression was to one of a similar position at Malvern Urban District Council, where in addition to the normal civic tasks that he was now familiar with, that of electricity supply was to be added. It was during the period at Malvern that HPM began to rise to prominence, and it is clear that he had taken easily to the very different world of local political intrigue, treading the oft-times difficult path for a municipal officer, that of balancing the public good against the personal whims of those having charge. Undoubtedly he honed the persuasive skills which were to stand him in such good stead over the coming years. His entry to the ranks of Freemasonry probably also dates from this period, very much a pre-requisite to success in municipal circles of the period. His achievements during his time at Malvern included an entirely new gasworks, a sewage system for a large proportion of the district, design and construction of a new Isolation Hospital, introduction of the electricity supply and an improved water supply by deep pumping, all in addition to the normal upkeep of roads, etc. At Church Street Council House, adjacent to the gas works, in 1901 Henry and Elizabeth lived with their now four children and kept a general domestic servant. Highly thought of, the Malvern UDC had steadily advanced his salary from £450 per annum to £600 and finally £700 for, as one councillor observed, 'the day when Malvern will most appreciate his services is when he leaves his present position for another appointment.'

That HPM was contemplating moving on was evident by 1904, and such was his growing reputation as a municipal engineer that he had already turned down moves to both Tottenham and Northampton before accepting the not inconsiderable elevation to County Surveyor & Engineer for Kent, succeeding a local man, Frederick W Ruck. He arrived at a very crucial time, for Kent was at the forefront of road surfacing experiments as the impact of motorised traffic began to be felt. In 1903 they had commissioned a report from D Joscelyne,² formerly Chief Engineer to the Public Works Dept of the Government of Bengal, who

found that the standard water bound 'macadam' surfaces were simply not able to withstand motorised traffic, that problems with dust and loosened surfaces would inevitably increase. In 1903 an experimental stretch of tarred surface had been laid at Farningham and it fell to HPM to both monitor this and to trial further dust laying experiments in 1905 and 1906, where 'painting' road surfaces with tar proved partially effective. In 1907 his contractor was applying two coats at a cost of ½d per square yard! Meanwhile he had reported that the local road-building materials were not strong enough, importing granite from outside the county at some cost, although even this was to crumble under new anti-skid studs that motorists were fitting to their tyres. He eventually advocated that water bound surfaces would have to be discarded entirely in favour of bituminous grouting or similar treatment. From 1908 he had ensured that Kent had its own tar spraying equipment and it became a pioneer county in the mass tarring of road surfaces, its use of 'tarmac' increasing twelve fold (2,728 tons to 31,905 tons per year, 1910 to 1913).



All of this high profile experimental work certainly enhanced his reputation as a road engineer - many local engineers and surveyors of the day were specialists from other fields, lacking his background in construction. He began to be noticed in the road improvement lobby in parliament and developed a collaboration with William

Rees-Jeffreys (WRJ)³ from 1905. On formation of the Road Board⁴ in 1910 WRJ was appointed its first Secretary and it was logical that HMP, along with several other county surveyors, was appointed an engineering advisor thereto. Three years later, 19th November 1913, HMP was to become Chief Engineering Officer to the Road Board, having retained until that appointment his position at Kent CC, although increasingly having left day to day affairs with his deputy, and (from 1913) successor, H T Chapman. At the age of 49 he finally left the world of 'hands on' civil engineering for the corridors of power, a seismic change indeed.

As an officer of the Road Board his duties would primarily have been to evaluate applications made by local authorities for road surfacing and improvement funding. However, his opportunities were few as the Great War was to intervene, on the outbreak of which the Road Board immediately found itself almost totally committed to commissioning new road infrastructure to serve military needs, both within numerous new camps as well as servicing existing ones. It was also necessary to settle with local authorities for any extraordinary damage done as a result of the increased military traffic. HMP displayed such organisational skills in the role that, in October 1916, he was seconded to the War Department in order to fulfil a similar role in a Roads Directorate for France. Finishing ultimately with the rank of Brigadier-General, he was responsible for the construction and upkeep of some 4,000 miles of roads in the British occupied area, having a large workforce of largely skilled road and quarry troops under his command.

His services won him a CB and the Legion d'Honneur in 1917 and, on his retirement from service in the Autumn of 1919, a KCMG. Now Sir Henry, he returned to the newly formed Ministry of Transport as Director General of Roads, a senior position with responsibility for both framing and implementing all aspects of government policy, regulatory as well engineering, and with considerable autonomy in a largely railway dominated department. The first Minister of Transport, Sir Eric Geddes, a Conservative MP with railway interests, had been Inspector General of Transportation in France over HMP. Regarded as the parliamentary inspiration for the MOT, he was seen as conceiving the idea whilst in France, and it seems likely that the two men had formed an early alliance.

During the 1920s there was substantial parliamentary will on all sides to develop the road network and the 'Arterial' road concept was firmly established. The policy remained to use 'the power of the purse' to kick-start approved local authority schemes, by-passes, etc, the rather more tricky equation being to persuade them to compromise with others in order to achieve wider national objectives. HMP's persuasive powers are frequently commented on by WRJ and he is to be found involved with numerous projects, both construction and traffic management, around the country, becoming increasingly adept at chairing public enquiries. One of the several inter-departmental committees chaired is of some interest. There was considerable backing for a 'Northern & Western' motorway scheme between Uxbridge, Birmingham and Manchester, to be largely privately

financed, tolled, and acting as a relief to unemployment. Although a part of the government of the day policy, this last was seen as opportunistic and HMP had concluded the traffic forecasts to be over optimistic on a more rigorous examination of the statistics prepared. The whole thing rumbled on for some years but, of course, Britain's motorways did not emerge until many years later.⁵

Apart from travelling widely during the course of his duties and preparing numerous comprehensive reports - including the regulatory issues such as vehicle taxation, driver licensing, etc, that ultimately saw implementation in the 1930 Road Traffic Act - he was President of the Institute of Transport (1921), on the London & Home Counties Traffic Advisory Committee from 1924, latterly Chairman thereof, as well as President of the Shropshire Society in London, etc. Further honours were to be bestowed, Maybury Road in Edinburgh was named after him in 1927 and he received the Freedom of his home town of Shrewsbury in January, 1928, after having been closely involved with the design of the 'English Bridge' there. A Chair in Highway Engineering at the University of London was established in his name. The decision to resign from his full time MOT role in 1928 was possibly influenced by the health of his wife, who was to die the following year, as much as any approach to retirement age. Elevation to Baronet came on his departure from the Ministry of Transport, but he was to remain as a retained advisor on roads, bridges and traffic. In 1929, however, he was to almost bring about his own downfall.

During the election campaign of 1929 that returned the minority Labour Government of Ramsey-MacDonald it would appear that Lord Maybury had made public utterances on roads policy, presumably espousing some Liberal party viewpoint that was seen as being contrary to Labour party policy and leading to strident calls from therein for his dismissal, it being inappropriate for either a civil servant or retained advisor to take sides in this manner. Lloyd George, no less, was sufficiently incensed to threaten withdrawal of Liberal support for the government, which would have brought it down. Cyril (later Lord) Hurcombe, as the senior civil servant, interviewed HPM and Herbert Morrison negotiated a diplomatic solution that held he had been 'indiscreet' and it was to be left there. The incident possibly indicates HPM's personal politics, not altogether surprising given the period that he first became involved in government circles⁶ and his wartime role, but also perhaps hints at Masonic influences at work.

Whether retirement had been contemplated or not, from 1929 HPM took on a whole raft of new activities. His main home had remained in Kent and he had become a JP for the county. He became Chairman of the British Quarrying Co Ltd on formation in 1929, an industry he may well have had earlier interests in, becoming President of the trade association three years later. In 1930 he was joint author of a report to the 6th Congress of the International Association of Road Congresses, held in Washington, on 'Highway Transport - Correlation & Co-ordination with other Methods of Transport'⁷. On its formation in 1933 he was appointed to the London Passenger Transport Board. He continued to be in demand as an expert to advise or adjudicate on road and traffic management issues around

the country and to chair enquiries, however, his final such appointment was to be a surprising departure.

During the 1930s concerns arose as to the unregulated nature of air-transport and HPM was set the task of Chairing a second public enquiry into the future of civil aviation, reporting in 1937. Briefly, since it is largely outside our sphere, he set out what were to become both the guidelines for route licensing and the future Air Traffic Control system. A further proposal for the establishment of regional airports with a hub based on Manchester was, sadly, lost due to the World War 2. It was perhaps an unusual role for someone of his background, but a fitting end to a distinguished career.

The outbreak of war found HPM living in north London but, as he wrote to his friend and colleague Frank Pick at Christmas, 1940, it was 'too near the power stations and the bombs' and he evacuated to the country, eventually returning to Shrewsbury. In August, 1942, he re-married, his bride being his private secretary, Katherine Pring, but died the following January 7th, 1943. The report in the 'Shrewsbury Chronicle' of the memorial service held at Meole Brace shows a mainly quarrying industry attendance, apart from family members, although there is mention that a further memorial service was to be held in London at a later date. Writing later of his role as Director General of Roads WRJ observed, 'For a few years he was given opportunities and used them constructively to re-shape road policy and to make road history.' A fitting tribute.

NOTES:-

- 1 The writer proposes to continue to gather information on Sir Henry Percy Maybury, as regards his family background and career, with the objective that this would then be available should a fuller biography ever be attempted either by himself or other interested party.
- 2 A copy of the 1903 Joscelyne Report and related papers is in the Kent CC archives and it is intended that a future study thereof will form the subject of an article in *Newsletter* in due course. 'Dust' created by motor traffic was the burning issue of the day.
- 3 William Rees-Jeffreys, (WRJ), 1871-1952, writer and publicist. Closely involved with the formative development of roads policy in the early 20th C, together with HPM must be recognised as one of the leading authorities on the subject. A lifelong roads campaigner, he is another key personality deserving our attention. His semi-biographical account of developments over sixty years, published in 1949, is a key text:- *The King's Highway*, Batchworth Press.
- 4 The Road Board was constituted in May, 1910, under the provisions of the Development and Road Improvement Funds Act, 1909, that empowered the Board to construct new roads and make grants from the Road Improvement Fund to local authorities for road surfacing and improvement to existing highways. Previously responsibility for roads was a purely local issue and came loosely under the Local Government Board (which was, effectively, to become the Ministry of Health!) in central government. Always controversial and ultimately

disbanded, it was succeeded by the separate Ministry of Transport, which inherited the funding powers, from 1919.

- 5 For the background to this, see presentation by Jonathan Winkler, 'A British Autostrada? - attempts to build motorways to relieve unemployment, 1920-1930', users.ox.ac.uk/~queue0777/files/british-autostrada-presentation.pdf
- 6 WRJ considered Lloyd George (as Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1908) to be the first front-rank statesman to appreciate the importance of the road from the national point of view. He was instrumental in ensuring the funding criteria that led to the Road Board and was an ardent supporter, against fierce opposition in parliament.
- 7 In conjunction with Milne (Great Western Railway), Pick (London Transport) and Shrapnell-Smith (Commercial Vehicle Users Assoc); it is not clear if HPM and the others travelled to Washington for the Congress but it seems possible; Frank Pick in particular was a close personal

friend. The report, a copy of which is in the London's Transport Museum Library, is well worth studying as a contemporary take on what we would now call 'integrated transport'.

Acknowledgements:-

Don Collins (www.mayburyfamily.org), Bill Maybury (distant relative), Paul Rouet (LNWR Society), Tony Newman, John Naylor, London Transport's Museum Library, Kent County Council.

Tickhill Carriers

PHILIP L. SCOWCROFT

The tale is told that the South Yorkshire town of Tickhill cropped up in conversation in a railway compartment of an East Coast main line train maybe a century ago. One passenger, momentarily roused from slumber, murmured "Tickhill: Saxton's bus" before nodding off again.

This does sound a little like a story that may have been invented by Tickhill people themselves. Saxtons were high people in the place and, at one time, owned much of the land that was not owned by the Earl of Scarborough. Saxtons still live there, though they now have no connection with local transport, as they had for around three quarters of a century from the 1870s to the 1950s. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, at least three Saxtons were active in local transportation: Henry, potato merchant and omnibus proprietor, Robert, carrier and cab proprietor, and Joseph, also a carrier and cab proprietor. Despite these job descriptions, it appears that Joseph took the major part in operating the omnibus service.

Saxton's bus was established before 1914. During the Great War, Joseph's wife, Florence, drove the bus frequently during staff shortages. This operated between Tickhill and Doncaster via Wadworth. A double-decker, it charged 9d "outside", 1/- "inside". Capacity was eighteen, all seated. Outside passengers were expected to walk up Wadworth hill on the return journey from Doncaster, if the bus was full. It is probable that Saxtons worked the connecting service from Tickhill and Wadworth railway station on the South Yorkshire Joint Line to Tickhill town centre, two miles distant. We read of a fatal accident involving that bus on 4 May 1914, but the operator is not mentioned in the newspaper report.

Saxton's bus was superseded by motor buses during the 1920s, by various operators, though notably Underwood's,

later East Midland Motor Services. However, Alfred Saxton, son of Joseph, first traced in 1927 in a directory as one of three carriers in Tickhill, still operated as a carrier in 1956, with one horse, Paddy, 27 years old, hauling loads of furniture and so on. He told a newspaper reporter that he had never been tempted to diversify into motors.

Tickhill had had carriers long before the Saxtons. In 1822, twelve different services, by carrier or stage waggon, ran to Bawtry, Doncaster, Nottingham, Louth, Sheffield, Worksop and York. Seven different operators were involved, most of them once a week, but the services to Nottingham, Doncaster and York were twice a week. All carried passengers, space permitting. By 1834, these had expanded, Doncaster and Nottingham being served daily by Deacon & Co. Doncaster was additionally served thrice weekly by James Weston. James Ibbotson worked thrice weekly to Gainsborough and Sheffield. George Malkin weekly to Sheffield and twice weekly to Retford. Longer-haul stage waggons were still in the frame in a directory of 1837, but they gradually disappeared, and had certainly done so by mid-century. Short-haul carriers prospered, however, with workings, often daily, to Bawtry railway station, Tickhill's freight railhead, operated by Isaac Lockwood in the 1860s, R Whinfrey in the 1870s. Still services to Doncaster two or three times a week, to Rotherham twice a week, Worksop once a week and, at times, to Sheffield.

The part played by carriers in the economies of Tickhill and countless other small places, is remarkable, even if details are not easy to pin down. Consequently, relatively little has been written, countrywide, about them. Information needs to be dug out from directories and occasionally newspapers; laborious, but ultimately rewarding.

The Hare and the Tortoise

Extract from *The Leatherhead Advertiser* 6 June 2006

100 YEARS AGO

Extracts from the *Advertiser* 1906

For some time rumours have been current of the advent of a motor bus in the district. We are not aware, however, whether this is the enterprise of a local gentleman or a company, but the idea is certainly very alluring, for there can be no doubt that it would be an advantage and quickly oust the old type of horse-drawn vehicle.

Motor buses are increasing rapidly in London and the old familiar horse car will soon be a thing of the past in the Metropolitan streets.

It is even contended that the motor bus will take the place of the electric tramways in and around the large towns.

Very strong arguments can be advanced in favour of the petrol bus, the most powerful being that it does not call for any expensive permanent way, poles, wires etc., such as the laying down of an electric tramway entails.

A motor bus making trips between Dorking, Leatherhead, Reigate and Guildford or even to London would be useful.

In order to compete with the electric tramway or railway, the motor bus must obviously be as comfortable and roomy as these means of transit, and to get a heavy motor bus running on ordinary give-and-take roads, is not as easy a problem as appears at first sight.

In the course of time, no doubt the construction of the horseless vehicle will be improved, and when such progress is made the advantage of the street rail will become less marked.

Extract from *The Leader*, January 25, 1924

Proposed extension of Wrexham and Rhos Tramway

INQUIRY AT WREXHAM

The Wrexham and District Transport Co propose to extend their tramway from the present terminus in Hill Street, up the hill through Queen St. and Broad St., so carrying the service into the centre of Rhos. The inquiry was conducted by Mr. Alan D Erskine, an Inspector under the Ministry of Transport, with Mr. A. Morrell, clerk. There were also present Mr Sydney Morse representing the promoters of the Order asked for, Mr J S Lloyd representing the trustees of Hill St. Chapel, Rhos, Mr William Jones (Messrs. W R Evans and William Jones, Ruthin), representing the Denbighshire County Council, Mr George Vernon Price, clerk to the Wrexham Rural District Council, Mr Allen representing Ruabon Gas and Water Co, Mr Stuart Clark, chairman of the Highway Committee of the Rural District Council, Mr S Roberts, Rhos, Mr J T Edwards, Ponkey; Mr J R Jones, Rhos; Mr Ellis Jones,

County Surveyor, Mr A A Hawkins, manager of the Transport Co., the Revd. John Roberts, Mr E A Cross, etc.

Mr Morse in opening the case for the promoters, said the extension was 3 furlongs, 4.09 chains. He then explained the proposals of the new scheme, the effect of which would be to convey passengers to the business centre of Rhos and prove of much convenience also to workers. Mr Morse referred to the opposition of the Ruabon Gas and Water Co.

Mr Allen, representing that Co., said that the objection was that the rails would run over the mains of the Co., and it was desired that this should be avoided. The Co. had not the least desire to oppose the extension which was most desirable, but they sought to protect the mains. He thought a conversation with the engineer would facilitate this.

Mr Morse agreed that this conversation should take place, and the same thing might be said with regard to the other opponents. Everything to meet the views of the opponents would be done.

Mr Samuel Roberts, J.P., chairman of the Rhos Parish Council gave evidence and said that the Council had unanimously passed a resolution in favour of the extension. It was thought the extension would increase the rateable value and would be of great convenience to the district and to the residents.

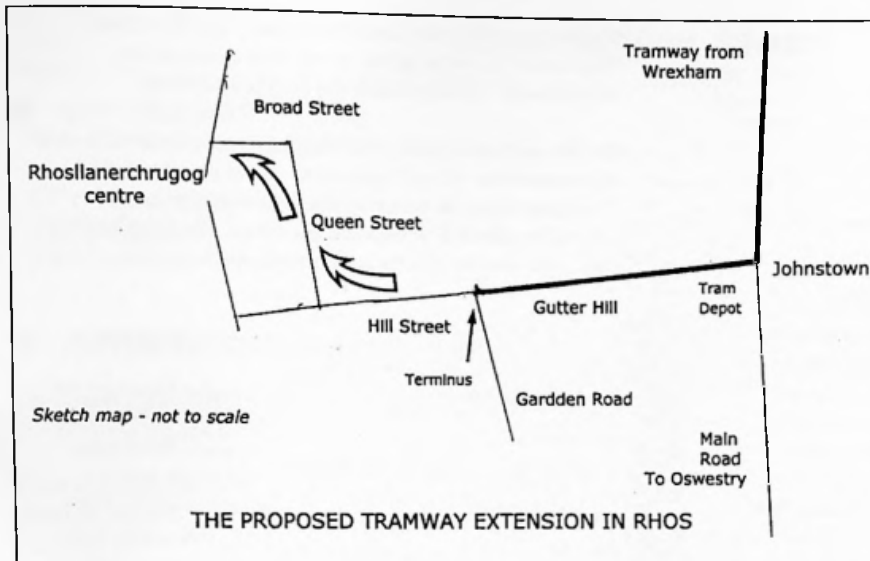
Mr J T Edwards, check weigher at Vauxhall Colliery, supported the extension in the interest, among others, of the older miners, many of whom had to walk a long way to the colliery and having descended were obliged to walk a long distance to their working place. He thought that these men should be carried to their work as other workers were in other branches.

Mr. Wm. Parry, Rhos, secretary of the Hafod Collieries, supported the extension of behalf of his men. It would be convenient not only to workers but to the general public visiting and living in Rhos,

Evidence in favour of the proposal was given by Mr Roger Williams, Rhos; Mr Geo. Hill, Rhostyllen; Mr Richard Hanmer, Rhostyllen; and Mr John Griffiths, verger, Esclusham Church.

Inspector Joseph Rogers said on January 16th, 17th and 18th he took a census of the traffic on the road near the present terminus of the tramway. The vehicular traffic for the three days was 303, 360 and 292 respectively. The pedestrian traffic was 2,597, 1,969 and 1,842. The days were Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and the hours were from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Mr Kilsbury, chief engineer of the company was then called and explained the plans. He considered that most of the matters upon which objections had been raised could be arranged in conversations.



This concluded the evidence for the promoters and the inquiry was adjourned for lunch.

Upon resuming, the first witness called for the objectors was Mr M Spencer Rogers, assistant county surveyor, who stated that he considered the corner of the proposed route in Hill St. and Queen St. ought to be widened in the interests of the inhabitants and drivers of other vehicles. The corner as it at present existed would prevent the driver of the tram seeing what was approaching.

The witnesses called in the interest of the Hill St. Presbyterian Chapel were Mr J. H. Francis, Gerald St., Wrexham, and Mr Benjamin Hough an official of the Chapel.

Mr Francis said that the old Wrexham Presbyterian Church (prior to the building of Trinity, King St), was situated in Hill St., Wrexham. During the period when services were held there, the screeching noise made by the cars turning a bend in the road was a source of continual annoyance to those attending the

services, and it was decided to move from there.

Mr. Hough stated that he did not object to the principle of the scheme, but he was present in the interests of the congregation attending the Chapel, to see that their interests were safeguarded.

Mr George Vernon Price called Mr Rees Evans, Rural District Council surveyor, who said the narrowest point of the proposed route was 16 ft. 6 ins., and he considered it dangerous to have a tram track there under those circumstances. He had authorised a census of the traffic passing up and down Hill St. to be taken on Monday and Tuesday last, and the figures taken

were on Monday, 494 vehicles and 790 pedestrians; Tuesday's figures showed 512 vehicles and 2,139 pedestrians. The census was taken between 12 noon and 8 p.m. on Monday and 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Tuesday. He suggested that the whole of the objection could be overcome by the Transport Co and at a much lower figure than suggested by them.

By the Inspector: If the suggested widening at the corner was authorised by the Ministry, no property of any description would have to be pulled down except for an enclosing wall.

Mr Morse addressed the Inspector and said that the whole of the objections or opposition comprised the suggestion that widening improvements should take place, and that the entire cost should be borne by the Transport Co. There had been no complaints against the main proposal, and as regards the objections, the promoters, assuming that they admitted the objections, were prepared to undertake the cost if the amount involved was only slight, but when the sum would very probably involve an expenditure of £1,000

or more, it became a very serious matter. Each mile would cost the company £2,000. It was one of those cases which could not be of any benefit to the promoters unless people used it. If the public did not use the extra facilities, it would mean a dead loss to the Co. As it was, it was urgently required in the public interest. They knew of the care the Minister took in these matters, especially for the safety of the public, and it was assured that he would make such regulations as he thought fit. If all expenses apart from the original scheme were thrown on the company he felt the scheme would have to be reluctantly held over for a further 26 years.



Tram at the terminus in Hill Street, Rhos, c.1905

Reproduced by kind permission of Bridge Books, Wrexham, from Rhosllanerchrugog, Johnstown, Ponciau Pen-y-Cae - A Collection of pictures by Dennis W Gilpin (1991)

It was stated that the total cost involved is £10,286. The Inspector said that he would report the result of the inquiry to the Minister and that the parties would subsequently be informed of his decision.

Mr J. S. Lloyd moved a hearty vote of thanks to the Inspector for the patience and interest that he had shown throughout the inquiry and this was unanimously recorded.

Your Editor comments:

My immediate thanks to *Gordon Knowles* for providing the Leatherhead newspaper cutting at the opening of this article. The Leatherhead newspaper was thinking forward, in 1906, to the motor bus superseding even the electric tram. It contrasts vividly with the Wrexham report of almost eighteen years later, where the Parish Council of Rhosllanerchrugog [usually just called Rhos], and the Wrexham Rural District Council, welcomed tramway extension proposals, with not even a mention of a motor bus as an alternative option.

Before the Ministry Inquiry in January 1924, a lengthy report on the Parish and Rural District Councils' approach to the matter had appeared in the *Wrexham Advertiser* on 17 November 1923, and the locally dominant considerations had been:

- (a) they had considered the matter for the last 20 years, but it had not materialised "owing to the attitude of a certain person"
- (b) having a tram to carry the miners up the hill to Rhos after their shifts, would "add many years to the lives of many of them"
- (c) the tramway construction would "provide employment in the area at such a vital time as the present".
- (d) the tramway company would be paying for the extension.

It is pertinent, — not impertinent — to say that in the early 1920s, Wrexham was a 'backwater'. *Newsletter* has had two items recently, from this period: "Fatal Accident at Penycae" (No.46, p.19) and "Opening of New Road at Brymbo" (No.44, p.19). To reinforce the point, two further newspaper extracts follow. They are about putting on a bus service to Llay, another significant mining village in the Wrexham area:

Extract from *The Wrexham Advertiser* 3 March 1923

Councillor Cyril O. Jones asked if any reply had been received from the North Eastern Railway Company on communication between Wrexham and Llay. The Town Clerk said he had only received an acknowledgment from the Railway Company.

The Mayor thought that it would pay the town to hire a series of 'buses, even at a financial loss, and let them run at stated times. Chester were doing it. The trade and prestige would come into Wrexham, and if the railway project broke down, or if put through it would take some time, in the meantime the people would get accustomed to going to Chester, unless they did something.

Councillor Hickman understood that the Wrexham Transport Co. were going to try that route as an experiment. He seconded the Mayor's motion.

.....
On the motion of Ald. Ed. Hughes it was decided that a sub-committee should interview the Manager of the Transport Coy. It was also decided that the sub-committee should interview the Great Western Railway Coy., and discuss the situation with them.

Extract from *The Wrexham Advertiser* 17 March 1923

Mr J.C. Lee read a letter from the Traffic Manager of the L. & N.E. Railway Company, with regard to the suggested passenger train service between Wrexham and Llay. The question, he said, had been given careful consideration, but the company regarded the proposal as one they could not adopt. Before such a service could be run it would be necessary to equip and signal the Colliery Railway and that would be a very expensive matter.

The Town Clerk said that they were in communication with the Great Western Railway Company. The sub-committee had met the Transport Company and asked if it was their intention to run a service to time table to Llay. Mr Hawkins told them that if the Corporation would provide a stand for the use of their buses, they would put on a service. Mr Hawkins had submitted a time table for buses to run on Mondays, Thursdays (4 journeys a day) and seven journeys on Saturdays.

The members expressed satisfaction at the progress that had been made and approved the use of the Queen street stand.

..... It was further decided to inform the drapers association of the present position with regard to the communication to Llay.

I have not explored the provision of bus services in Leatherhead by early 1923. But I suspect that they were a little more widespread than those in Wrexham. On the other hand, Wrexham did have an electric tramway. Leatherhead did not.

What happened next? The tramway extension in Rhos never came to fruition. In fact, the Wrexham tramways, which consisted simply of the one line Wrexham - Rhosyllen - Johnstown and an (insufficient) way up the hill towards Rhos, ceased in March 1927.

By April 1933 (not 1923), Western Transport Ltd, the successor company, ran buses via the tram route, but continuing right into Rhos, every fifteen minutes on weekdays, throughout most of the day, with a first bus at 4.35 a.m. and a last bus at 11.00 p.m. Llay Main had (broadly) a half-hourly service. In 2006, Arriva operates every 15 minutes to both Rhos and Llay. And Wrexham County Borough, now elevated to a unitary authority, has built what must be one of the finest municipal bus stations anywhere in Britain. Has the tortoise at last overtaken the hare?

RA

Association Matters

■ NEW MEMBERS

Peter May of Helston (retired proprietor of May's Motors of Elstead)

B.P. Archive at University of Warwick (Corporate)

Geoffrey Jones of Henbury (author of "75 Years")

RAC Foundation (Corporate)

■ SEPTEMBER 2006 MEETING

Our September Meeting at the Coventry Transport Museum was attended by eighteen members.

Garry Turvey opened the meeting by reporting on the development of the Association with progress on a number of fronts. There has been an encouraging reception of 75 Years of the Traffic Commissioners with good reviews and satisfactory sales. As a result, we were financially ahead of where we expected to be, while membership continued to grow steadily and had reached 115.

At the previous Board meeting, he had posed the question "Will the Association outlive the input from its founder members?" and the response was a resounding yes. Key to the development of the association was the need to attract new members, identify those playing an active rôle outside the Board, and to work closely with corporate members. From this the board had adopted a five-year vision as follows:

- Membership increased to 150/160 with at least 10 more corporates with serious historical interests.
- An enhanced *Newsletter* printed on higher-quality paper with perhaps a colour cover.
- Annual Conference and biannual Business Meetings as now.
- Considerable progress in the spheres Tony Newman is already working in leading to greater recognition of the Association's rôle and added value to the historical movement.
- Some actions had been considered including having more localised meetings for those meeting unable to come to the conference or the Coventry meetings.

In the subsequent discussion, this concentrated about the different perspectives between the professional and the historian in Association matters and the need to adequately cater for each of them. It was suggested that more needed to be tackled about the history of roads – Garry Turvey agreed to consider a roads theme for the 2007 conference.

Nigel Furness then gave a presentation on the Road Transport History Internet Project. Firstly he outlined his background as software engineer and consultant now working as a lecturer at the City of Bristol College as well as being a transport historian, having written *A History of Thomas Tilling Ltd 1847-1942*, the first part of which was due to be published shortly. The Project is an attempt to address a number of specific issues on Road Transport History using an internet-based system, involving different organisations and individuals. Its aims are to:

- 1 Provide access to historical information on road

transport;

- 2 Provide a means of preservation, protection and storage of data;

He was seeking the Association's and its members' input into the planning, requirements and analysis needs of the project. The expected output was to be a website from which it would be possible to locate information or sources of information on road transport history and contact others involved in similar research.

The success of the Project depends on the support of interested parties and to this end, he asked that members write to him at 19 Footes Lane, Frampton Cotterell, Bristol, BS36 2JG or by e-mail at nigel.furness@cityofbristol.ac.uk.

Tony Newman suggested that the Association might be able to assist by identifying other bodies such as museums, enthusiast groups and academics that might be contacted as part of the Project. He felt that the question of authenticity needed to be considered as part of the requirement and analysis needs of the Project. Ian Yearsley, representing the Tramway Museum Society, noted that it already held extensive archives and it was important that existing work not be duplicated by the Project. Garry Turvey thanked Nigel for his presentation and said that the Project would be considered further at a future Board meeting.

After lunch, Chris Hogan on behalf of the Post Office Vehicle Club, gave an illustrated presentation on 100 Years of Post Office Motor Road Transport that had been celebrated in 2006 with a number of events including a special exhibition at the Coventry Transport Museum. He started by reviewing mail transport from the 1635 Proclamation of King Charles I through the era of the stagecoach and mailcoach and the widespread adoption of rail from the late 1830s. Transport of mails was the preserve of contractors throughout this period and the first use of motorised road transport was in the late 1890s when a number of contractors introduced such vehicles in place of traditional horse-drawn vehicles.

The first use by a GPO of its own transport was by the fledgling telephone service that bought an Alldays & Onions 10 h.p. car for use at Gloucester in 1906 and this was followed by the Stores Department buying a secondhand Wallis & Stevens traction engine. By 1907, some 35 routes operated by contractors had been motorised but it was not until 1914 that the GPO bought its first vehicles for mail delivery work, twenty motor cycle combinations (motor cycles with sidecars). After the war, the telephone service was again in the forefront of expansion (having borrowed Army lorries during the war to help repair telephone lines brought down by heavy snow) and bought 600 surplus army vehicles bought from Disposals Board, made up of Albion 3-ton vans, Ford 2-ton lorries, Ford 7 cwt. Vans, and Douglas and Triumph motor cycle combinations in 1919.

By this time, the Mails Department realised it was paying 'over the odds' to contractors for mail carriage and identified economies if postman-drivers were employed

for both mail transport and delivery. Treasury authority was obtained to buy fifty-five GWK 8cwt. mailvans but the make was a disappointment and subsequently purchases were Fords and later Morrisons. The GPO fleet grew rapidly and by April 1926, the Royal Mail fleet had grown to 1,002 vans, 176 Motor Cycle Combinations and 48 motorcycles while the telephone fleet was made up of 736 Motor Cycle Combinations, 167 Fords and 44 Albion trucks.

Dave Bubier gave a presentation into his research on the life of Henry Percy Maybury with a talk entitled - Sir Henry Maybury - but who was he? (The detail of the talk is now to be found in Dave Bubier's article on Sir Henry Maybury earlier in this Newsletter).

Following the presentations, there was a general discussion on various topics:

- John Skilling enquired whether the Association had had any response to its submission on release of vehicle data. None to date.
- Ian Yearsley mentioned DVDs of the Mitchell & Keynon films, and said that the third of the DVDs that would feature transport, should be due for release towards the end of 2007.
- Ken Swallow highlighted the connection between Local History and Family History and the need for a clearing house for research. To this end he had written to the Liverpool society that he was a member of. (This letter is reproduced elsewhere in this Newsletter).
- Dave Bubier mentioned the Genes Reunited website at www.genesconnected.co.uk that might be useful for members.

Connections at Chester

Seven members of the Association met informally at Roger Atkinson's house with a wide brief: what do we get out of the R&RTHA, what more the Association could be doing, and what more we individually could do. We had a good wide-ranging discussion, long on issues, short on solutions. Indeed, most of the matters identified were common to other national 'generic' societies: for example, people tended to be much more interested in their own locality or in a specific narrow topic (in our case, a specific transport provider or vehicle manufacturer), rather than in the broader national picture. And membership was getting older — how were younger people (those under 60!) to be attracted?

Specific conclusions were:

- The membership list should be published (subject to members being able to opt out, in accordance with data protection legislation). The list should include members' addresses and special interests.
- A post of Conference Organiser should be created. The role would be to suggest a theme and location for the annual conference, and then to organise the speakers and venue, administer the applications, and arrange for the publication of the talks (if appropriate).

- The Association should consider the future of records of road transport. How should their retention be encouraged? Was it essential for the original documents to be retained, or would digitalisation be acceptable? A similar problem concerned members' research notes and photographs; these were likely to be destroyed following the member's death.
- A visit to Crich should be organised for members, specifically to see the archives and digitalisation programme.

The get-together was particularly useful for making connections and exchanging detailed information on our own interests and researches. We therefore agreed that it would be desirable for a similar meeting or meetings to be held for the benefit of members in other areas. (One has been arranged in Harrogate for North Eastern members on 30 November)

And special thanks were given to Pam Atkinson and Rita Newman for providing such an excellent buffet lunch.

Peter J Brown

An Invitation

Sue Hill (Buckley) of Clitheroe was invited to the Chester meeting reported above. It was not on the right day, so she could not come. But she rapidly replied to one of the questions in the invitation letter:-

What do I get out of the Roads & Road Transport History Association?

I consider myself as an infant member of merely two years in this Association, but I am proud to be so!

Since the golden days of the Bowland Transit project (Newsletter No.40, p.9) — there lies another tale of innovative buses fading in the Bowland Forest due to politics! — I read the R&RTHA Newsletters with great

interest, as they are full of historical tales of transport and how things came, or may come, about. And, I admit, I am gaining appreciation and some understanding of subjects reported that are well away from my own subject of bus services.

Having dealt with community, rural & urban projects, and speaking as an ex-driver / ex-operator and currently a (temp) Special Projects Officer, I am afraid, being a little political, that when looking for a vehicle to fulfil a need, practicalities for the job bear foremost in my mind, followed by cost, performance, extras and, dare I admit it, colours! Model, chassis or engine types, may enter briefly into the conversation before being dismissed as 'incidental necessities'.

I apologise to all those vehicle experts out there and I know, transports of all modes have made great advances through history and great innovations have been made, but to me they either have two wheels or four? How much will they cost to run, etc.?

It is the individual whose transport need to achieve a goal (e.g. to reach a place by sensible means), that aids them to arrive at a solution which, in turn, enables others to benefit. It is the advancement of transportation that interests myself. For example, an integrated journey with no delays and refreshments or unnecessary waiting times, like what some of our European colleagues have achieved e.g. from bed & breakfast to top of a mountain via taxi, bus, train and cable car all in the price of one ticket linking one to the other - someone had to make a start by having the idea and conviction to try the idea out! How? Over here in the UK, such integration is only a dream!

My husband (an HGV driver) begs to differ and, more often than not, takes the R&RTHA Newsletter to work at the earliest opportunity where he and his colleagues enter into 'the male domain' about times gone by, local transport rallies or the latest vehicle procurement and

performance - the R&RTHA Newsletter is often seen by more than myself before I get a chance to read it!

The R&RTHA to me is a vast reference library on anything to do with transport, not quite full of books in the traditional manner - but ones who can talk, not just words or pictures, but backed by personal experience or know how. The R&RTHA Board, being the Trustees (or Librarians) to this wonderful library may not know the answer to your every enquiry, but they certainly know of someone who can point you in the right direction!

We are used to transport appearing very low on the agenda of most authoritarian decision making. It is important that such as the R&RTHA should continue, - as I have found from personal experience - the actions or solutions of the past can / may prove useful in the development of future transport innovations, and without access to such a wide-experience source of knowledge, these ideas may be lost or may hinder the work of future transport developments by people like myself, caretakers of tomorrow's transport ideas.

Letters

■ INSPIRATION IN THE TRAFFIC COURTS

(Newsletter 47,p.11)

I am sorry to say that David Grimmett is correct in suspecting that I would not specifically remember him. I certainly do remember many, many hours in the Board Room preparing for fares hearing, and I suspect that many of the company witnesses hated it more than they feared the Public Inquiry! We never went before the Traffic Commissioners until they had all been 'cross-examined' in detail to make sure that there would be no surprises at the hearing and that we had covered all avenues. I do remember the particular hearing for Western National when we were opposed, inter alia by the indomitable Miss Gunn. It was before Major General Sir John Potter (who we all thought of as Daddy Potter). He always had a soft spot for the small operator and given the resources which the big companies could call upon, I do not think there was anything unfair in that.

I suppose that when I started I did know little. My only bus background was that having been brought up in the western valley of Monmouthshire we were served by four bus companies - Red & White, Western Welsh (whose Crosskeys garage I could see from my bedroom window - perhaps the first thing in the outside world I ever saw!), - Ralph's and Griffin. Added to that I did eight weeks as a bus conductor with Red & White in Chepstow in 1957. That included a spell on the picket lines during the national bus strike of that year, during which I drew slightly more in strike pay than I paid in union dues. I also remember, I hope correctly, that the bus fare from Chepstow to Bulwark was 4½d and there was always a full bus. Sometimes I managed to cover the whole lower deck and actually get some fares from those rushing down the stairs. It gave me a lifetime aversion to fares that were not in round pennies, and after decimalisation in 5p's.

At the time I took over from my then senior partner Tom Corpe on his retirement it was still more common for bus companies to use QCs or other senior counsel for major applications. Bristol had often used Edgar Faye QC, but that was dying out for most companies, except the Municipals and one or two in the South East. Of course I well remember the battles in Leicester. Expansion by Midland Fox into the large estates around the City with mini-buses and the removal of 'area stop signs' led to some very long sittings (or standings in the case of Geoffrey Hilditch, in the witness box as I cross-examined him). In those days Leicester City was usually represented by Matthew Thorpe QC (who also appeared a lot in the south east). He perhaps never quite liked a common or garden solicitor appearing against him, who probably did not show the deference that QCs expect. He is now a Lord Justice of Appeal. I was of course well aware of Geoffrey's considerable involvement in the privatisation of the National Bus Company. I even acted for his son, Christopher, on a case when he was with Red & White at Cwmbran.

That someone to whom I was always opposed in traffic court, and to whom I no doubt caused some grief, could refer to me as a friend I think speaks volumes for the bus industry and the same could be said of road transport.

Indeed in all the years I dealt with the bus industry I only came across one person I really did not like and subsequently found I was not alone in that

I find the Newsletters very interesting and this tempts me to apply for membership of the Association.

Geoffrey Jones

■ WOMEN IN TRANSPORT

In Newsletter 45 at page 12, mention is made of the appointment of women to senior positions by two of the

big groups (Go Ahead and Stagecoach). Although it is only in recent years that large companies have made such appointments, many years ago a number of independent bus operators were run by women. As a Worcestershire man I think, for example, of Mrs S G C Williamson, who ran Blue Coach Services, Worcester, for many years. If I remember correctly, she was the daughter of the previous proprietor and it may be that there were no male members of the family to take over, or willing to take over, the business. There were also examples in neighbouring Herefordshire, such as Irene Baynham, Ross-on-Wye and Miss D J Staples, Leominster.

Glancing through editions of *The Little Red Book* from the 1950s and 1960s, one finds a number of operators in the name of women, but in some cases it seems likely that male relatives were also heavily involved in running the undertaking. There would seem to be scope for someone to research the role of women running independent bus operators.

I am not well-informed about the history of road haulage, so I do not know whether there were also such companies run by women.*

E Keith Lloyd

- * Your Editor turns to that excellent work *Companion to British Road Haulage History*. It has a useful piece on "Women in the road haulage industry", even referring to the Womens' Road Traffic Club, set up in 1936 ... "partly because other organisations refused to accept women or treated them as second class members" The role of women in haulage was not an easy one. As Keith Lloyd suggests, it is a potential field for more research

▣ **THE STANDING JOINT COMMITTEE** – formed in 1938
Page 17 in *Newsletter 46* twice refers to the Standing Joint Committee having seven member organisations, but it lists only six. Have you omitted one?

Grahame Boyes,
Richmond (Surrey)

- * I do appreciate *Newsletter* being read with such care and attention. With apologies, there was indeed a seventh organisation in the Standing Joint Committee that was set up at the end of 1938; I failed to transcribe it. It was the Scottish Carriers and Haulage Contractors' Association, described as "an organisation comprising only A and B licence holders in Scotland connected with the Associated Road Operators in England".

Ed.RA

▣ FLYING BUSMEN - FINGLANDS

In John Hibbs article "The Flying Busmen" in *Newsletter 47* Footnote 1 refers to *British Independent Airlines since 1946* by A C Merton-Jones. I requested an inter-library loan of the publication, which eventually appeared as one of several alphabetical parts. Unfortunately, this part did not contain operators beginning with F; and this has not been forthcoming from the library. I am seeking information on Finglands of Manchester, one of the pioneers on the Manchester to London route in the early 1930s, which operated two aircraft between 1948 and 1953. If any member has access to this volume, I should be most grateful if they could copy the reference to Finglands to me. I would of course reimburse any expense incurred.

Also in connection with Finglands, I believe that there is an article on the company in *Coaching Journal* for January 1933. Again, no library has been able to come up with this issue. If any individual or institution holds this issue, I would appreciate the loan of the magazine or a copy of the article.

Eric Ogden, 40 Burnedge Lane,
Grasscroft, Oldham OL4 4EA

▣ SYMBOL ON LORRY BODY

On 28 October 2006 I attended a large sale of 'classic' commercial vehicles at Guyhirn, near Peterborough. The sale included a variety of restored and unrestored vehicles, of which one of the latter caught my eye.



The vehicle concerned was a Bedford S-type tipper, registration mark 648 CVX. Although an elderly vehicle, the cab contained the vehicle copy of the Plating Certificate* and the interior of the body was lined with what appeared to be galvanised steel sheets, so typical of vehicles used for the bulk transportation of newly-harvested peas from the field to the processing factory.

More unusual, to me at any rate, was a marking embossed on the centre of the sideboards on each side of the body. The marking is illustrated here. It appears to be a lead or similar disc of about two inches in diameter, in the centre of which was embossed a Crown and the figure 271 and 67. Given the use of the Crown, it occurred to me that this may have been some form of official 'seal', which was issued to the vehicle in the year 1967.



Have members of the Association come across this form of marking before and what was its purpose?

Bill Taylor, Duxford

- * The *Companion to British Road Haulage History* entry for "Plating and testing" explains that 'Ministry' plating and testing for goods vehicles exceeding 1½ tons was introduced from 1 August 1968. (Existence of the Plating Certificate means that the vehicle was still in commercial use in 1968 – or later).

■ ON NEWSLETTER ITSELF

I have not had this magazine for long, but I find it more interesting than most magazines, as they seem to be 75% on preservation of motor vehicles, whereas this magazine deals with more interesting aspects.

I did work in the bus industry for 46 years, always using a spanner, except for the last two years in stores. I knew all the Achilles' heels of the types of vehicles operated.

Norman Keen, Weston-super-Mare

- * In *Newsletter* 49 it is hoped to publish a few short reminiscences by Norman Keen on the work of a bus mechanic, and the practical problems that had to be faced.

Editorial

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our readers. Instead of sledges and reindeer on our front page, you are offered a different, but I hope cheering, picture — the reassuring police presence that some of us remember, a little nostalgically,

Newsletter No.47 brought in more follow-up material than any earlier issue that I can recall. Flying Busmen, road services to 1930s airports, transport to Fort Dunlop, produced letter, but the most of all were on coal delivery – ranging from coal holes to bulk coal haulage, in lorries with not altogether adequate brakes. "Not altogether adequate brakes" then brings us back to the Handcross Hill accident of 1906; *Newsletter* No.47 gave the technical engineering details. Now, David Grimmett has produced not only a remarkable postcard, but has explored some of the family or social history underlying it. (Was the message written upside down to the address to foil the postman reading it as he popped it through the letter box?)

Traffic census details may seem to be an exceptionally dreary subject, but there is a 1910 census lined up for publication in *Newsletter* No. 49. Meanwhile to whet your appetites, the two rather rudimentary censuses taken on Hill Street Rhosllanerchrugog in January 1923, reported on earlier page of this issue, paint an interesting picture. They were much less concerned with volume of vehicular traffic, than with the numbers of pedestrians. Indeed, at Rhos, we have no details of the types of vehicles nor whether they were commercial or private, horse-drawn or motor. And there is no mention of bicycles at all. Perhaps there really were no bicycles – not even delivery boys? Doubtful. But standing out even more sharply – and, essentially, the purpose of the census – was that up and

down Hill Street, Rhos, on any of the days surveyed, (except for the Rural District Council's 'out of line' Monday figure of only 790 – which deserves to be double-checked), there were between four and eight times as many pedestrians as there were vehicles.

More by chance than by design, trams in Birmingham get significant coverage in this issue. See Transport to Fort Dunlop and Tram Letters. And provincial horse buses, seldom touched upon, feature both in Tram Letters, and in Tickhill Carriers.

Our first article, on Sir Henry Maybury, is one that reflects the fruit of some real research by Dave Bubier. Research itself is a topic that occurs on other pages – not only those pages specifically designated "Research" — in the Book Reviews, for example.

NEWSLETTER No.49

- The target date for issue of No. 49 is

8 March 2007

Contributions by 6 February please

- Provisional target date for No. 50 is

7 June 2007

Contributions by 8 May

- The 2007 subscription covers Nos.49 to 52

Book Reviews

LANCASHIRE UNITED – A Centenary Celebration 1906-2006 by Eric Ogden. Venture Publications Super Prestige series. ISBN 1905 304 129

This is the third book on this subject to have been written by Eric Ogden. It is profusely illustrated and there are a dozen or so full colour pages. He acknowledges that at some time in the future there is room for a definitive history of this company, and one wonders why he has not tackled this in the 21 years since his last effort. Whilst it is apparent that some further research has been done into the early history of the company, there are many significant events which receive no mention. Laudable is the attention given to the personalities which guided the company throughout the years, for LUT was a firm that inspired great loyalty as witness the numbers of directors and officers who served it for over 40 years.

Mention is made of the little-known activities of the company in North Wales in the 1920s and more needs to be researched on this topic. The early bus services in South Lancashire, though infrequent, were remarkable in providing interchange facilities at Newton-le-Willows which greatly enhanced their usefulness, but this gets no mention. In the post-World War I era, the company's activities in Liverpool were very important but no explanation of the decline in their scale is covered, nor of the agreement with Ribble covering excursion and tour operations in both Liverpool and Bolton which enabled the mileage on one to be worked off on the other. The role of Avery and Roberts Ltd. as the company's managers in Liverpool for several years is not made clear.

As LUT operations filled in the areas between the numerous municipalities' services a very high proportion of services were jointly operated. At various times there were joint agreements with nine municipalities and two companies, not counting the Tyne-Tees-Mersey long distance services, and one feels that this alone justified more than a casual mention. In its later years there was an expansion into long distance holiday services which is not recorded at all.

As in his two earlier books, there is an imbalance in that details of the fleet, including fleet and registration numbers, receive disproportionate attention and much of the detail could have been embodied in the very adequate captions, making the text more readable.

Lastly, despite the very comprehensive pictorial treatment, including several excellent maps, some may feel that the cover price at £18.95 is rather high for a 9in. by 6½in. 144 page softback book.

TBM

NORTHERN COUNTIES OF WIGAN – A History of the Company and its products from 1919 to 2005 by Bob Rowe

Venture Publications – 192pp hardback, illustrated. ISBN 1905304021 £27.50

The Northern Counties Motor & Engineering Co Ltd (NC)

was registered in November 1919. H G Lewis, a Cardiff rolling stock proprietor, T G Bell a Wigan garage owner, D G Hall and S H Lewis being the directors. The two latter went on to develop Hall Lewis Ltd at Park Royal, which led to Park Royal Coachworks Ltd. The author however stresses that NC was established as an independent entity prior to the North London concern, although it appears that subcontracting from NC to Hall Lewis did occur. In the first four years or so of NC's activity, car bodybuilding appears to have continued — although this escapes the standard work on coachbuilders by Nick Walker (1997) — and the small coach bodies initially bore some resemblance to large saloon cars, as an illustration of a Berliet 16-seater confirms. Other small foreign chassis, such as Fiat and Lancia, were also bodied by NC in its early years, as well as such British marques as Vulcan, Thornycroft and, unusually for passenger operation, Pagefield.

It is tempting to see local patriotism or regional (northern) loyalties in some of the pattern of orders: Wigan Corporation, the Stalybridge Joint operation (SHMD) and Manchester Corporation. Scottish orders were stimulated by what the author describes as 'a significant association' which Albion Motors developed with NC during the 1920s. By the mid-1930s, despite design development, including the first NC double-decker in 1928, and steel-framing, 1933, and what appears to have been a healthy order book, a trading deficit led to a new company being set up at the end of 1935, still with strong Lewis family involvement. Production however fell in the second half of the 1930s to 43 in 1938 and 29 in the following year.

Wartime activity included general service wagon bodies on Albion chassis and the assembly of ckd ('completely knocked down') Dodge and Chevrolet military vehicles. PSV bodybuilding resumed with 30 'unfrozen' chassis and Utility bodies by November 1942, for which the largest order, 102 Guys, went to London Transport. The pattern of wartime trading resulted in important peacetime orders, from such customers as Lancashire United Transport, Potteries Motor Traction and Southdown. Re-bodying and the resumption of tram-replacement programmes also swelled the order books. Post-war developments which include the complex changes of ownership from 1992, are covered in six chapters, of which one forms an 'interim' history of another Wigan coachbuilder, Massey Bros.

Massey began as greenhouse builders in 1904, turning to bus bodybuilding in 1916, developing a local authority clientele, and including Cumberland Motor Services as a regular customer. Utility production was permitted from 1942; composite construction predominated with Massey in the early post-war years, until metal framing became their standard product from 1952. Half-cab double deckers were the typical product of the Massey works until their takeover by Northern Counties in 1968.

Acquisition of the Massey works at Pemberton meant that Northern Counties were operating on two sites approximately three miles apart on opposite sides of Wigan. In 1976, the opportunity was taken to acquire a

former weaving mill adjacent to the Massey site and new production premises were erected 1979-80, the final move from the original site and its sale taking place in 1983-4. Changes in site in the 1980s were accompanied by directorship changes, with the ending of the Lewis family connection, and by enormous changes in both the operating and the construction sides of the bus industry. Their effects on NC crowd into the final chapter – (a family tree of acquisitions in the manufacturing industry would have made a useful appendix). NC gave up single-deck body production to serve as the double-deck assembler for Plaxton, both being within the Henlys, subsequently Transbus, group. Following the acquisition of Plaxton and Transbus (as Alexander Dennis) in 2004, the future of Northern Counties was far from secure, and this history, (a worthy successor to Eric Ogden's 1974 study of NC) ends with the ending of NC production in January 2005.

Richard Storey

A LITTLE CHIT OF A FELLOW – A Biography of the Right Hon. Leslie Hore-Belisha. By Ian R Grimwood. Published by The Book Guild Ltd, East Sussex, 2006. ISBN 1 85776 994 5 Hardback; 279 pages; £16.99

This is a disappointing book. Both grammar and style are faulty from time to time, and there are faux pas such as referring to the monarch as 'His Royal Highness'. It is not clear for whom the book was written. We are told, for example, that BBC radio was called 'wireless' in the 1930s. On p.89 there is reference to 'the Munich Crisis of September 1938', but no further information is given, while elsewhere the author goes into much more detail concerning significant historical events. A serious publisher would have ensured that the book had received critical attention before it appeared.

R&RTHA members and other transport historians will be interested chiefly in Chapter 4, Minister of Transport. It tells us little that we do not know about the industry, but it covers the issues of road safety, the driving test, and, of course, pedestrian crossings, with rather more detail on ribbon development and road improvement. There are some statistical tables to outline the story. Raids on the Road Fund are explained. But the 23 pages relate to the three years in which Hore-Belisha was Minister (but never in the Cabinet), and there is more to be learned about his work when we turn to his subsequent appointment as Minister for War.

The more specifically biographical study of the man and his abilities is worthwhile, since he remains so little known. The tragedy of anti-semitism, which held back his political career, and must have been painful to

experience, is a sad story indeed. The very title illustrates the put-down from which a good man suffered.

John Hibbs

D DI MASCIO'S DELICIOUS ICE CREAM

– by Roger de Boer, Harvey Pitcher and Alan Wilkinson
Past Masters, 31 Queenswood Road, Moseley,
Birmingham B13 9AU. ISBN 978 0 9543982 1 7
28 pp. A4 format, with colour cover £7.49

Roger de Boer will be well-known to readers of Newsletter for his contributions on milk floats and other electric vehicles – for example, *Newsletter No.47 "Milk Floats on Malta"*. In this book he turns his attention to another phenomenon that was very much part of our lives in the postwar years, but which, though not vanished, is less prominent today. The ice cream van operated by an Italian family.

Dionisio Di Mascio came to Glasgow in 1920 to learn about ice cream making from his uncle. He moved to Coventry after passing through the city in 1932 and happening to see the car factories changing shifts, and discharging crowds of workmen into the streets. The crowds spelled great potential.

The book has many pictures, several anecdotes and recollections (i.e. oral history or scrap book history). These brief items are then interspersed with the main text; with a resultant impression of muddle. However, the R&RTHA often has cause to take pride in the wide perspectives of its membership. In Roger de Boer, we have a member who has looked into bye-ways that few of us explore, and set about writing books or articles about them. Highly to his credit, he has gathered in local material and made a record of it. Another book by him, published in a bi-lingual Dutch/English edition was *Independent Bus Operators of the Friesian Island Ameland 1923-1967*. ISBN 0-9541182-4-3. A slightly more specialist subject than D Di Mascio's ice cream. On Di Mascio, your reviewer's final comment is that any reader attracted by a mixture of social history, oral history and Italian-owned ice cream vans, would not regret buying this quite modestly-priced book.

RA

The Editor has also received a further substantial work meriting review, but not achievable by the deadline date for this *Newsletter*. Therefore to be reviewed in *Newsletter No.49*.

Halifax Passenger Transport 1897-1963 by Geoffrey Hilditch (Oakwood Press) ISBN 0 85361 647 7
£27.50

REGISTRATION PLATE M1

Motor vehicle registration plate M1 was assigned to a 1903 Benz Comfortable car belonging to the last Lord Egerton of Tatton. The car, the original plate and historic papers are on permanent display at Tatton Old Hall, in the National Trust property, Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire, currently leased to and managed

by Cheshire County Council. However, the right to use the M1 mark on the public highway was sold by Bonhams, the auctioneers, in July for £300,000. The money will be used to fund restoration and conservation projects.

KWS

Book Notices

'ERE COMES VE BRAHN BUS, DUCK!

Richard Bourne and Roger Davies, 2005,
32pp, illustrated £5.00
Probably available from Rainham (Kent) Bookshop –
phone 01634 371591

Translated, the title of this pot-pourri refers to the imminent arrival of one of the brown (and green) double-deckers operated by Chatham & District (C&D). Having its origins in the tram-operating Chatham & District Light Railway Co, its title was changed in 1929 to Chatham & District Traction Co., and the sale by the British Thomson-Houston company of its interest to Maidstone & District Motor Services Ltd was followed by conversion to bus operation. 43 Leyland TD1s were acquired 1930-1 and C&D remained a double-deck operator, its later fleet including Bristols, some of which were transferred from Maidstone & District, and 8' wide Guys.

C&D merged with Maidstone & District in 1955, less than four years after the worst fatal bus accident in UK bus transport history: the deaths of 24 Royal Marine cadets on the evening of 4 December 1951, when a Bristol double-decker running on side-lights in an area with poor street

lighting, collided with an inadequately marked marching column. It is to the credit of the compiler of the booklet that the tragedy is not passed over, and to the credit of C&D that the value of their service to Chatham and district is still recognised, not least because the hilly locality was not conducive to cycling to work.

Richard Storey

POSTBUS HANDBOOKS

Our corporate member, the Post Office Vehicle Club, has published *Postbuses 1998-2006*. This brings the position up to date from the original *Postbus Handbook*, published in 1998. As well as giving details of the vehicles, the book records that routes have declined from 221 in October 1998 to 101 in September 2006 – attributing this loss of local authority subsidy, lack of patronage and the streamlining of Royal Mail's delivery arrangements.

The Postbook Handbook (ISBN 1 897990 47 2) is still available at £12-50 either from the Post Office Vehicle Club or from British Bus Publishing. *Postbuses 1998-2006* is available from the Club at £5-00. For more information, please contact Christopher Hogan on 01384 394832 or e-mail POVehClub@aol.com

Follow-ups

FLYING BUSMEN (*Newsletter No.47*)

I was interested in all of the articles in No.47, but that on Flying Busmen was of particular interest. Fred Wright of Louth is mentioned and I am able to answer some of the questions posed about him.

Anyone interested should log on to www.louth.org, and then choose the "Past and Present" option, and then "A History of Wright's Bus and Flying Services". Look at both the Bus Services and the Flying History sections. The information and pictures on the site have recently been edited; originally more details and some pictures of the plane were included.

"Fred Wight was not only interested in buses. On 20th September 1931 he obtained a private aviator's certificate, no.10100, from the Royal Aero Club of the United Kingdom, after a flying training course at an airfield near Nottingham. He subsequently flew from Waltham aerodrome where he met an instructor called Mr Michelmores. On 7th May 1934, they formed W & M Flying Services and purchased an Avro 504 Lynx biplane of 1919 vintage, from Air Travel Ltd of Gatwick, registration number G-ACRE. The price was £340. My father also built a Flying Flea, but his flying activities justify a separate story."

I have recently been in contact with the author of the Wright's section of the website, Mr Geoff Wright, the eldest son of Fred Wright, and his brother John Wright (youngest son). This was in the course of my research into the bus services.

John Bennett, Loughborough

AIRPORT BUS and COAL DELIVERY MEMORIES

The *Newsletter* has a great ability to bring alive our own memories, in my case through two separate contributions in the September issue.

I vividly remember the small bus (not unlike latterday mini-buses) the Devon General ran from what the Great Western Railway euphemistically claimed was Torquay airport (but actually perched on Little Haldon close to Teignmouth) to Torquay itself, a journey of at least 45 minutes. A dedicated vehicle, it only seemed to perform these airport runs, usually with three to six passengers. Like most early civilian airports, facilities at Haldon were minimal and apparently, once they had checked in, which involved standing on the weighing machine, passengers usually returned to the bus to wait for the plane. At one time the GWR service ran from Liverpool to Cardiff, so-called Torquay, Newquay and the Isles of Scilly, but the most popular part of the route was Cardiff to Torquay, avoiding the long way round the Severn Tunnel.

The service was not resumed after the war, and indeed Haldon aerodrome never had another commercial service. But in the late 1950s a new 'Torquay' appeared in the form of Exeter airport, for a service, again with bus connection, from I believe Liverpool. My chief memory is of the puddings that were served at Torquay's five star Imperial Hotel to celebrate the new era. Other reporting duties made me a late arrival, but all was not lost as the waitress served me all three pudding choices. It was a lavish occasion, attended by Mayor and Corporation, airline staff and the first passengers. But rather a waste of money since the service only lasted two Saturdays.

Yet in the late 1950s most towns hoped they would one day have their own airport, a length of tarmac with a hut. Two rival organisations sought to sell membership subscriptions to local councils who could supposedly benefit from their expertise.

Turning to coal, on the back page RA recalls how coalmen had to work for their wage carrying hundredweight sacks up steps. At Harpenden, where we lived briefly, two-hundredweight sacks were the order of the day. Their tops arched over the coalman's back, they stretched down almost to their ankles, yet seemed to be handled with routine calmness. On moving to Teignmouth in 1938, it became my job to count the twenty hundredweight bags the coalman normally delivered at a time. Though there was a gently sloping route he could follow to pour the contents through a window into the cellar, he preferred a much shorter though steep route including a flight of twenty steps into the cellar.

While some items were still delivered by horse and cart up our steep hill, the coal came by motor. But on an eight-month tour of pre-war southern England when my parents prospected for the perfect place to live, I had frequently seen steam lorries laden with coal. What excitement when a distant plume of smoke and steam approached. Unfairly taxed off the roads, the story of the steam lorry still has to be fully told.

David St John Thomas, Nairn

COAL DELIVERY

It was an interesting article on page 20 *Newsletter* 47. I have seen very little on the subject which, until the 'smokeless zones' etc. of the 1960s, was a very familiar trade throughout the British Isles.

I was living in North London in the late 1950s and the main suppliers of household coal seemed to be either the London Co-operative Society or Charringtons, although another firm, Rickett Cockerell, also had deliveries in the Barnet area at least. The usual practice was for one or the other parent to call at the 'coal office' in the coal yard at Oakleigh Park Station, followed by delivery by lorry, in hundredweight sacks, a few days later. All these years later, it is not recalled which types of lorry were used, but it is recalled that Charringtons had some Dennis examples.

One or two independents were still around – one such example being a one-man business which occupied a piece of land next to his bungalow in Oakleigh Road, New Southgate. It was an untidy 'yard' on which was parked an old flat-bed lorry – possibly an early Bedford – and on top of that was red hopper. The hopper was filled with coal and the individual sacks were loaded from the bottom of the hopper. The 'yard' was eventually developed for housing in the mid-1960s.

You may get similar letters with other examples. The whole subject is worth a book on its own.

Bob Williamson, Studley

It was hard, dirty and unpleasant work on a coal cart, and not always did customers get what they were paying for. With bag deliveries, the supposed 20 x 1 cwt bags could, in fact, be 18 bags. A woman in East Anglia, sitting unseen

on an outside privy, heard 18 bumps, not the 20 required for her ton. True! Also, after the first few deliveries, once some empty sacks were available, it would be possible to 'skim' the other 70 or more sacks, put coal into the now empty sacks and sell them on your own account.

Or, delivering many tons of coal in bulk in high-sided, high capacity hopper wagons, it was possible to drive off before the coal had all gone. School caretakers were reluctant to climb up to check that all the coal had been discharged — it was the Council's coke, not theirs. Weights and Measures inspectors used to 'salt' a school with a known quantity of coal, and then weigh the barn's contents after a bulk delivery. (If the barn was empty, it was too suspicious for short-delivery merchants).

To overcome fraud, a special vehicle for the trade was evolved, the Charrold Autobagger had a big hopper on a ten-ton or more chassis.* It was fitted with a moving belt on the floor which moved fast-forward to a discharge point at the rear. It could then fill sacks hanging from an overhead scale, or discharge down a chute into the coal cellar. They were made in quantity in St Ives in Huntingdonshire.

Bob Kilsby, Gosport

- For more on the Charrold Autobagger see the Companion to British Road Haulage History under "Coal traffic" Ed.RA

COAL HOLES and COAL CELLARS,

Keith Lloyd asks where the coal was kept in terraced houses that had no rear access (*Newsletter* 47 p. 13). The answer is "in the coal cellar". The surviving cast-iron coal-hole covers indicate its location. Where there is a basement 'area' between the front of the house and the street, the coal was stored in one or two arched cellars under the pavement, the coal being delivered through a hole in the pavement. Where there was a flight of steps up to the front door, the coal cellar was under the steps, with the coal-hole immediately in front of the steps. Domestic coal was delivered in bags (as illustrated on page 20 of *Newsletter* 47), which were emptied straight into the cellar (so that the merchant didn't lose his bags).

The situation described in Keith's letter is exceptional. Perhaps Esther Cheo Ying was living with a miner's family, who would have received free coal, delivered direct from the colliery in bulk.

Grahame Boyes

COAL HAULAGE DAYS

I was very interested to read the Editor's follow-up piece in *Newsletter* 47 to the letter in the same issue from E Keith Lloyd, which in turn was a response to a piece in *Newsletter* 46. Indeed these items brought back vivid reminders of my own involvement in coal and coke deliveries in the late 1950s/early 1960s — these were, I should add, bulk load deliveries ... I was not on a bagging lorry! Hence, if I may Mr Editor, I would like to add some of my own reminiscences of what was a very important era both in this country's history and that of the road haulage industry.

At the time mentioned, being young and perhaps even foolish, I and a workmate from a haulage company

operating in Reading, decided upon the sudden demise of said floundering business, that we would endeavour to pick up one of its defaulted contacts for coal and coke deliveries from the Welsh and East Midlands coal fields into the Reading area and set ourselves up in road haulage. The coal distributor to whom our employer was contracted was highly annoyed when, as my final duty for my erstwhile employer, I had to tell him that he was prematurely losing his contracted haulage service — in fact with immediate effect. I stood there, rooted to the spot, while he breathed hell fire and damnation and denounced my late employer with every curse he could think of.

In an attempt to end this tirade, while still standing there shivering in my shoes, I launched in with a suggestion that perhaps the contract could be transferred to me and my proposed new business partner and we would buy two of the lorries that were up for disposal and continue the service as before. At this point the blizzard in his office noticeably abated, so whipping from my briefcase a pre-prepared contract document, which we needed to support an application for a Contract 'A' licence, he signed it and I was on my way out before the ink had time to dry.

Thus ended one phase of my former life and commenced another — coal haulier. Or to put it more succinctly; business partner, lorry owner, driver, mechanic, route planner and administrator — you name it. Which, after being little more than an office bod — despite the grandiose, 'transport manager', title — was quite a shock to the system. I was no longer scheduling journeys for other guys but spending many hours a day behind the wheel driving them myself; no longer checking record sheets but actually writing them out — or rather, with some difficulty, trying to make the daily runs we were doing look legal on paper. I learned lorry driving skills — particularly reversing along the railway lines at pitheads, pushing back a line of coal wagons until you were under the coal-chute ready as the coal came tumbling down from the overhead belt. And woe betide you if you did not accomplish this manoeuvre efficiently within the one or two-minute maximum holding time of the shaker — if you had to have a second shunt to get into position you were in trouble. Beside the tirade of abuse from the conveyor-belt supervisor watching from above, you had to shovel up all of the coal spilled on the ground!

The lorries we bought were two six-wheeled high-sided, 20-ton gross weight tippers, circa mid-1950s vintage; one a Dodge with an underpowered Leyland engine (certainly so for hauling full loads up the steep Welsh hillsides), and very poor brakes for going down the other side, and the other was a Guy Warrior with a Primrose trailing axle and the luxury of a much more beefy AEC AV470 engine — although the brakes were no better. They were both old and pretty-well worn out by the time we got them, but they did the job five days a week with, needless to say, a lot of maintenance on Saturdays and Sundays. The hours were long, and after every long day you needed two baths; one to get rid of the coal dust from every nook and cranny of your body and one to get you clean after a change of bath water — after giving the bath a good scrub around the with Vim to get rid of the tide mark.

We loaded coal and coke from the many collieries of the

East Midlands and the Welsh Valleys and delivered it to coal merchants and industrial premises in the Thames Valley area. Some places were easy tips, straight-in, back-up, tip and away, at others there was always a long wait and some required the driving wizardry of Fangio to get reversed into the precise position the customer wanted the coal tipped — and him often forgetting that 13 tons of coal is a big pile that spreads quite a way no matter how well you tip it. One lady coal merchant in Reading used to give us a half-crown tip, a cup of tea and a slice of cake if we got it right (such riches!), but if you got it wrong it was out with the shovel again and no tip, no tea nor any cake.

Many were the trials and tribulations of our budding haulage business; breakdowns and punctures galore, accidents — fortunately nothing too serious, if you can call depositing most of a 13-ton load of coal in the middle of a main road into Coventry city centre not too serious, or a broken telegraph pole, again in Coventry, with a substantial disconnection of telephone lines for miles around; that's not that serious is it? Fortunately, at least nobody was killed.

Needless to say my success as a haulier was short lived, and I believe I've subsequently made a better job as a writer on transport matters. However, it is interesting to look back to those days when lorries were exclusively British made; when, before the Clean Air Act, almost every factory and household burned coal or coke, so, on bad weather days, the resulting smog was so thick you could hardly see your hand in front of your face and regularly made driving a nightmare; when road haulage was in one of its heydays and among the most common haulage vehicles one would see on the road (motorways were only just entering the picture at that time) were high-sided two, three and four-axled rigid tippers of only 14, 20 and 24 tons maximum gross weight, trundling along at 20mph and laden down with British coal and coke. We did, of course, still have a coal industry in those days, and a steel-making industry come to that, and even a thriving truck making industry. There were definitely no tachographs or working time directives. Come to that, no transport directives at all because Brussels was no more than a mere dot on a map. Oh happy days, I remember them well!

David Lowe, Wymondham

TRANSPORT TO FORT DUNLOP

(Newsletter 47, pp.18-19)

The article in *Newsletter 47* from the June 1919 Commercial Motor does not tell the whole story about how workers were transported to and from the new Fort Dunlop tyre factory, until the tram route was opened along nearby Tyburn Road in May 1920. In 1919, it was still difficult for the Dunlop Rubber Company to obtain sufficient buses for its workers' service. From April 1919 it had, therefore, been supplemented by a parallel service along the Birmingham & Fazeley Canal from a wharf near Aston station, using first one, and ultimately five, adapted narrow boats, each of which had three times the seating capacity of one of the buses.*

* Alan A. Jackson, 'Canal passenger services: a late flowering', *Journal of the Railway & Canal Historical Society* vol. 28 (1984-6) pp. 337-9

Grahame Boyes

May I add a postscript to Derek Giles' fascinating account of Dunlop's transport organisation, including its extensive passenger services. These, however, were shortly to be changed because Dunlop gave financial encouragement to Birmingham Corporation Tramways to open, in May 1920 (as Grahame Boyes mentions above), the tram route along Tyburn Road. This was entirely on reserved sleeper track, to the corner of Holly Lane, near to Fort Dunlop.

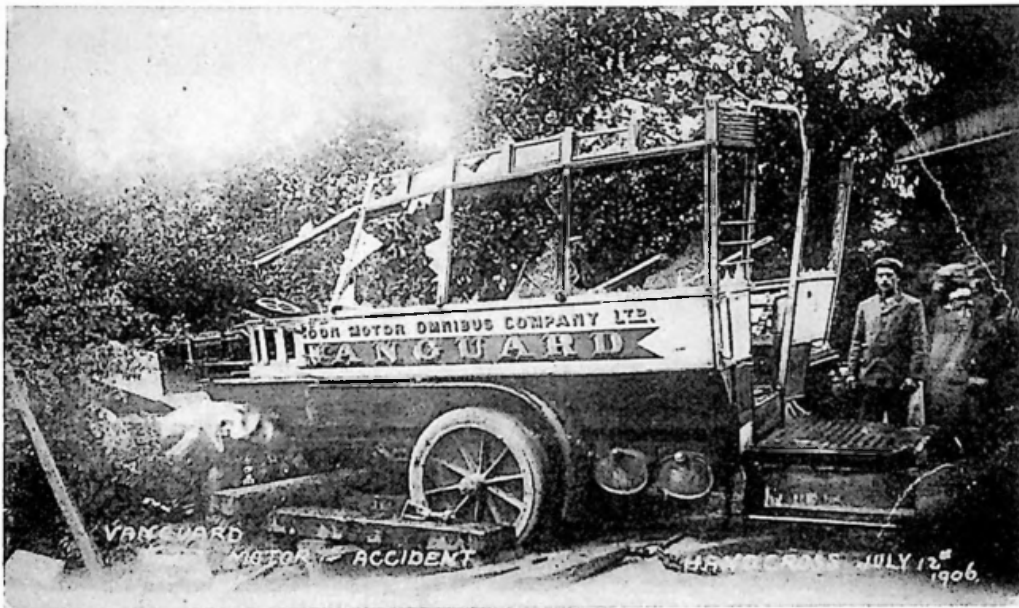
At this time, the area was largely open country, so BCT could expect little traffic other than that from the Dunlop factory. In February 1927, the Tyburn Road route was extended to the city boundary at Pype Hayes where there was housing development. Did this lead to trams arriving at Holly Lane full with passengers from the outer

terminus? Finally, Dunlop paid for a branch tramway to be built in Holly Lane and opened in 1930, partly on a private road belonging to the company. These tramways remained in use until the last day of tramway operation in Birmingham on 4 July 1953. (Much of this information comes from *Birmingham Corporation Tramways, Trams and Trolleybuses*, by Archie Mayou, Terry Barker and John Stanford, published by Transport Publishing Company, Glossop, March 1982).

It would be interesting to know to what extent these tramways superseded Dunlop's own bus network, much of whose fleet, by the description of it, was already sorely in need of replacement by mid-1919.

Ian Yearsley

The Handcross Accident



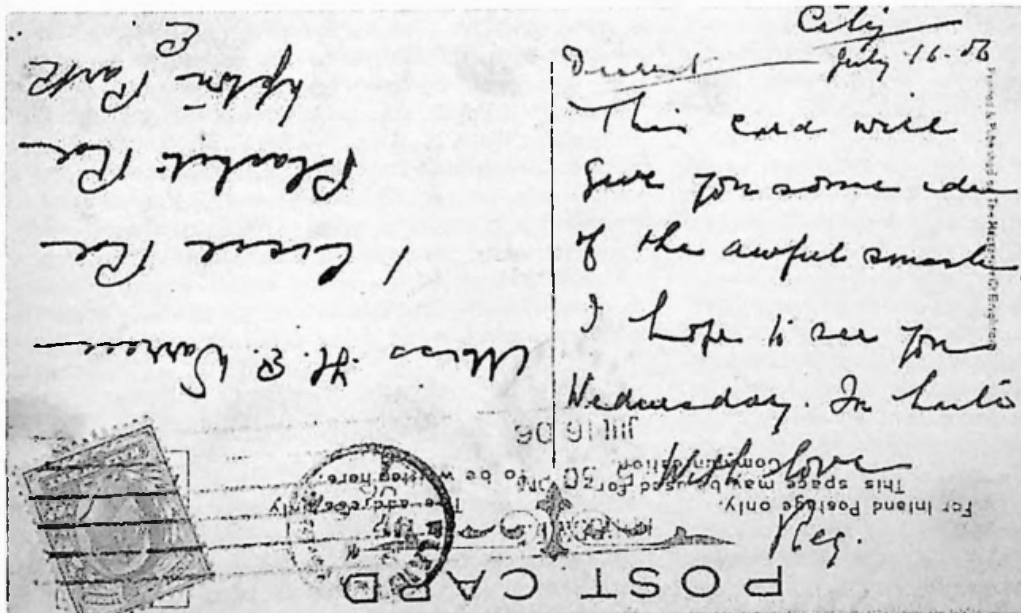
Background details to the Handcross accident of 12 July 1906 were provided by Alan Lambert, with additional comment by Dave Bubier, in *Newsletter 47*.

A commercial postcard depicting the wrecked bus is illustrated here. Perhaps the most extraordinary feature of it, is how quickly it had been produced and put on sale. The message side of the postcard is also illustrated. The manuscript text reads:

"City July 16.06
Dearest,
This card will
give you some
idea of the awful
smash. I hope to
see you
Wednesday. In
haste.

Reg.

When I read the card, I wondered who was the recipient, Miss Warren? Use of the word THE seemed interesting, with no further amplification. Did this imply that the crash was such news that everyone had heard of it or was someone involved in the crash known to



Miss Warren? What was the prime reason for sending the card - was it to advise Miss Warren of the crash or was it advise that Reg (the sender) would meet her on Wednesday? How much faith he had in the post; by my calculations 16 July was a Monday and he was arranging to meet her on Wednesday.

Now, further information has come to light, none of it directly transport related but fascinating enough to keep my research into this card going. I acquired the card from a lady who was clearing out her late uncle's bungalow (fortunately she had the sense to not throw it away!). The lady in question has been able to identify the recipient, Miss H. E. Warren as being her uncle's mother and that she was born in 1890. Miss Warren was therefore

approximately 16 at the time of the crash. My thought is what a strange card to send to a 16 year old girl unless she had some connection with the accident, and even then it would surely be somewhat insensitive to remind her of it. We have not identified the sender 'Reg'.

Time permitting, my research will continue, seeking the names of those involved in the accident is my next goal in trying to establish a link.

This may seem trivial, but it is a splendid example of why I love studying transport, it is not just a study of the nuts and bolts, but the portal to a wealth of our social history that is so fascinating.

David Grimmer, Minehead

Research

FROM THE RESEARCH CO-ORDINATOR (TONY NEWMAN'S) DESK

TRAFFIC COMMISSIONERS —

ROWAND HARKER and OTHER MATTERS

Following publication of the book *75 Years of Traffic Commissioners – a Lawyer's Personal View*, one or two things have come to my notice.

The National Archives (TNA) has reclassified a block of eight files originally deposited in the 1950s with a 75-year closure period to open access. This followed my visit there in May, when I raised the matter with the appropriate staff. Four of these files are about former Traffic Commissioners. I have looked at the one containing personal correspondence of Rowand Harker. It confirms that his first name contains no 'L' and reveals that he was ahead of his colleagues in his appointment as the first Chairman of Traffic Commissioners. His application for the post contains the admission that he had no experience of the transport industry and stated he would not accept a salary of less than £1,800 p.a. Interviewing of candidates appears to have been conducted personally by Herbert Morrison, the Minister of Transport. Morrison told Harker that his salary would be £1,500 p.a., which Harker accepted on condition that it would be reviewed after 1 year. He pressed for the earliest possible appointment date, so that he could become acquainted with the work. He thus became the first Traffic Commissioner, for the South Eastern area, on 15th December 1930. Harker's appointment was for 7 years, whereas other Traffic Commissioners' terms were for shorter periods. Because of the general financial situation, all such salaries were reduced by 10% from 1st October 1931. The review after one year was not in the direction anticipated! Harker sought to compensate for this cut in earnings by suggesting that his accommodation at hotels should include a private sitting room, but this request was not granted as already his scale of allowances was at the top of the Civil Service scale. It was decided in 1933 to absorb the Southern Traffic Area within the South Eastern boundaries. Harker felt this would raise his workload beyond reasonable levels and he applied to become Chairman of the Appeal Tribunal constituted by the Road and Rail Traffic Act 1933. His application succeeded and he took up the post for a period of 10 years on 15th March 1934, relinquishing his Traffic Commissioner appointment the previous day. Although

this job entailed a great deal of travelling, the caseload appears to have been much reduced, and he was at times invited to hear other unrelated cases in dispute. He soon realised that compulsory retirement at 65 would mean he could not achieve the necessary 10 years service to secure a pension. However, the outbreak of war meant an immediate end to his regular work and he was seconded to the staff of the Judge Advocate General on 7th October 1939. There was little work to do in this capacity but it did mean that his tenure as Chairman of the Appeal Tribunal was officially kept open until 1945 when he was able to retire after 10 years service, with a pension plus an annual retaining fee. Sadly, he only lived another year to enjoy these benefits.

My other finding, on the subject of 'Traffic Commissioners', was the listing of over sixty archival deposits containing these words, at various Record Offices. These appear on the internet site known as A2A. This is a growing process whereby Record Offices add items from their indexes to a national database. When the A2A database was updated in July 2006, it contained 9.6 million records relating to 8.8 million items held in 403 record offices and other repositories. Not all the entries are self-explanatory and it occurred to me that some of these items might be clarified by the visit of a local member to check the content of the record(s). There are numerous subject headings relating to the Association's interests and this batch on Traffic Commissioners is only the tip of the iceberg. The unexpected location of many records thus brought to light seems to me to be an indication of the treasures that may be waiting to be revealed to researchers. I would be glad to hear from any member who may feel they could spare an hour or two in pursuing these items at their local County Record Office.

ARCHIVES OF TRAFFIC COMMISSIONERS – AN EXCEL FILE

I can supply by e-mail an Excel file that I have composed entitled "Archives of Traffic Commissioners" – sub-titled "References to Traffic Commissioners (TCs) in A2A Index (First Revision)". It is offered to any member who feels inclined to undertake research. It embraces not only many records in relatively likely places, such as

Merseyside Record Office, but some others that one might not immediately think of. For example:

attempts to contact them appear to have been treated automatically as 'Spam'!

Depositor	Document Description	Location
Weaver Navigation Trust	Bouts-Tillotson case	The Waterways Trust
Whitstable UDC	TCs 1932-1938	Canterbury Cathedral
Provincial Tramways Ltd	1926-1934	North East Lincs
East Sussex County Council	Correspondence with bus companies re evacuation 1938-1940	East Sussex Archives

It is also worth noting that the Jersey Library catalogue is available on line at: www.gov.je/ESC/Culture+and+Lifelong+Learning/Libraries/default.htm

FLEET NUMBERING

At the last meeting of the "Passenger Companion" Editorial Group I was asked to arrange for a second general appeal (the first appeared on page 19 of *Newsletter 47* on colliery bus services) for any information; this time on the subject of fleet numbering.

Some examples:

- Those that started at 1 and numbered upward (often omitting 13) and as soon as a vehicle was withdrawn, its number was re-used.
- Fleet numbers matched by Registration Marks
- Those that had blocks of numbers allocated to different types.
- Several series, starting at 1 but each series prefixed or suffixed with letters to distinguish types.

There must be more. Please send any examples that you have encountered to the Editor of the "Passenger Companion", Dr. Corinne Mulley, Transport Operations Research Group, Claremont Tower, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU. E-mail: corinne.mulley@ncl.ac.uk

Please also include explanations of how the series operated, which operator used the system and, if code letters were used, what they indicated.

TRANSPORT HISTORY SOURCES – JERSEY

Any members who are researching Transport History in Jersey may find it useful to contact one or both of two websites. Having established contact and told them about R&RTHA, individuals working for the organisations described in the websites have offered to point enquirers in the best direction to further their knowledge.

One is The Jersey Heritage Trust website:

www.jerseyheritagetrust.org

This organisation holds the Jersey Motor Transport Archive, and although the archive has not yet been catalogued they may be able to allow access to anyone visiting Jersey, subject to suitable notice being given. They are only open on Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Fridays. Contact the Senior Archivist: Linda.Romeril@jerseyheritagetrust.org

The other site is La Société Jersiaise and this organisation has care of the Lord Coutanche Library.

Contact: anna.baghiani@societe-jersiaise.org

In this case they welcome specific enquiries for points of information, but it is advisable to make it quite clear from your subject heading that this is a serious enquiry. Initial

Family History - a template letter

Towards the end of the Notes on the Association's September Meeting Coventry, earlier in this Newsletter, There was reference to a letter that Ken Swallow has sent to the Editor of the Liverpool Family Historian, the quarterly magazine of the Liverpool & South Lancashire History Society. The letter is reproduced here, with the suggestion that members might find it helpful to use extracts from, if they were writing to their own local family history society. If you do write to family or local history societies, and there is any interesting outcome, it would be of great help if you would let our Research Co-ordinator, Tony Newman know:.. Either phone him on 01352 757693 or e-mail him at: toekneenewman@hotmail.com

Serendipity?

On the face of it, genealogists and students of local transport history may seem not to have much in common. But the building blocks that make up local transport history are the entrepreneurs, the families and generations of countless ordinary folk, most of them with no recorded place in the formal annals that come from academic

research. They are the country carriers, the coachbuilders, the early bus proprietors – and of course the railwaymen who feature in so many of our family trees. Historians have perhaps neglected the development of Britain's road transport. There has been a scarcity of historical evidence in comparison with canals and railways. There is room here, a great deal of it, for cross-fertilisation of research. A seed sown by a family researcher can, and often does, open up new sources of information for the local transport historian.

Two personal examples may illustrate the point. When I became involved in research into the nineteenth century Liverpool stagecoach operations of the Bretherton brothers, the discovery through www.genesconnected.co.uk that someone out there was looking for family links with the best known of the brothers, Bartholomew, eventually connected me to descendants of the family as far apart as Coulsdon, in Surrey, and Auckland, in New Zealand. From this chance alighting on a name on a genealogy internet site I could put more flesh on the bones of a study of an important part of the local transport scene. Then, more recently, another opening into a new avenue of

research came when I was asked by a family researcher in Sydney, Australia, to help identify a photograph of a bus in Crewe in 1905. This has quite by chance refreshed for me some research into bus operations in Cheshire – and raised some new queries that now need to be followed up. I believe it's called serendipity!

Your appeal for contributions to the Liverpool Family Historian prompts me to ask if through you if I can make a contribution by asking members of the Society to be alert to the scope for adding, however slightly, to our knowledge of our local transport history through the research into their families? Was great-grandfather a carter? – and if so where did he ply his trade, keep his pony? Or was he involved in the omnibuses or the trams? Was he one of those dairymen that kept a few cows at the end of a terraced street? – and what were his transport arrangements? Perhaps he worked "on the railways"? – I am certainly not excluding the railways and railwaymen. Nor am I excluding grandmother – she may have helped keep the wheels turning in the Great War.

You may not know, incidentally, that the Roads and Road

Transport History Association, of which I am a board member, encourages and co-ordinates historical research on roads and road transport. It embraces a wide range of interests amongst its membership. Individual members have an unbounded and varied interest in transport – name it, and somebody is studying it! And many of them are engaged in researching their family histories as well and are also in touch with their local history societies. I would be glad to supply further details if it would be of interest – they can be found at www.rrtha.org.uk

My request to members of the Society, through you Sir, is a simple one. If members think what they have found in the course of researching their family might add to our understanding of the local transport scene of years gone by, then please let it be recorded, even if publication may come later. If they would like to get in touch with me (on ken.swallow@virgin.net or 0151 722 7575) to pass on some information or point me towards some particular avenue of local transport research, I would be very interested to hear from them.

Ken Swallow (6413)

Tramway Grumbles in Birmingham

Letters of complaint in the late 1890s/early 1900s concerning the trams.

Common complaints were overcrowding, incivility by conductors, the smoke and fumes from the steam trams, poor timekeeping, the need to change trams at the Handsworth boundary, and the lack of a queuing system.

The letters were collected by G H Osborne and donated to the Local Studies & History Department, Birmingham Central Library. They are reproduced on an excellent local history website: "Digital Handsworth" (www.digitalhandsworth.org.uk/)

Ownership of the lines was complicated. Let it suffice here to say that the line to Perry Barr was served by the Birmingham Central Tramways Co Ltd, until the undertaking was taken over by a new company, the City of Birmingham Tramways Co Ltd., in the autumn of 1896. (The 1895 letter below, refers to "the Central Company"). A lease of the line to Aston passed from the Birmingham & Aston Tramway Co Ltd. to the City of Birmingham Company in 1903. The majority of the tramway leases held by this latter company expired on 31 December 1906, and the lines were then taken over by Birmingham Corporation, though with complexities resulting from ownership of sections of line by Handsworth or Aston Manor Urban District Councils. The January 1907 letter, which mentions Mr Baker, the Corporation's General Manager, also refers, with affection, to the one-time horse bus services from Perry Barr of Mayner and Allsop.

The writer had a longish memory. *Early Omnibus Services in Birmingham 1834-1905*, by the late Alec G Jensen (Omnibus Society c.1965), is one of the few published works (known to the writers) on provincial horse bus services. It records that Benjamin John Allsop operated buses from Aston the centre of Birmingham from 1868

and formed Allsop's Birmingham Omnibus Co Ltd in April 1878. The company went into liquidation in 1885, probably owing to tram competition.

William Mayner is referred to as a rogue and a thief. He was sentenced to five years penal servitude at Warwick Assizes in 1855. On his release, he resumed business as an omnibus proprietor on the Handsworth and Lozells routes. But he had a son, William Mayner Junior, also an omnibus proprietor, who was not on good terms with his father (and who may well have been the Mayner referred to by the 1907 letter writer).

The 1898 letter by Growler refers to the Parisian system of issuing numbered slips to waiting bus or tram passengers. This was in use by 1887 – *Newsletters* 26, pp.8-9 and 27, p.16, described this, with particular reference to the system of Correspondances (or Transfers).

To offer our readers an opportunity for a little research, the front of a City of Birmingham Tramways Co Ltd 2d ticket for the Perry Barr route is illustrated here. It is a



PRINCE OF WALES THEATRE
BIRMINGHAM
Manager : Mr J.F. GRAHAM
Grand Christmas
Pantomime
"JACK
AND THE
BEANSTALK"
EVERY EVENING AT 7 O'CLOCK

Matinees
MONDAYS&THURSDAYS 2 O'CLOCK
MARVELLOUS CAST
INCLUDING
Miss LIL HAWTHORNE
Miss ETHEL NEWMAN
Miss CARLOTTA LEVEY
MESSRS. KELLY & GILLETTE
AND
MR. GEORGE ROBEY
&c., &c., &c., &c.

March 7th., 1898

To the Editor of the *Daily Post*

PERRY BARR TRAMS

Sir, I was glad to see the letter of "Business" in your last Friday's Post, though my complaint is not based upon the same lines as his. A few weeks back I wrote you a letter, which you kindly published in which I complained of overcrowding and crushing to get on the trams which so frequently take place, and I reiterate a remark that the exercise of a little commonsense might obviate the difficulty. It is of daily occurrence, morning and evening, and is an abominable nuisance to all who are obliged to travel on them. I would ask why there could not be a few extra trams put on when the pressure is at the greatest, and why the queue system could not be adopted, or, perhaps, better still, why they could not issue tickets before starting, as they do in Paris, where, although the traffic is immense, they don't have the crushing and crowding. "Business" complains of having to wait five minutes; I complained of having to wait an hour in drenching rain and with no shelter on a football Saturday.

GROWLER

To the Editor of the "*Mail*"

Sir, - We read with pleasure of Mr Baker's triumph in organising so successfully our new electric trams. Would that it had been his lot to reside at Birchfield. It is common knowledge how in the first instance we were cut off from town altogether and today we see the Birchfield Road "up" and closed to vehicular traffic altogether beyond the Chain Walk, the Handsworth part of the route. An irregular service of trams starts some fifty yards from the Handsworth boundary to within one hundred yards of the terminus of the Newtown Row trams, that is over the Aston part of the route. Then there is a quick service over the city rails to Dale End, where we do not want to get to, as is proved by the numbers who alight at Steelhouse Lane corner, after the shortest pennyworth in the whole tram system. What an object lesson in municipal mis-management! What was the use of Aston electrifying their part nearly two years ago and burying ratepayer's money without any return of interest even? Then when Birmingham is ready on January 1st, Aston and Birmingham begins to think about arranging running powers. In the meantime, Handsworth is idle altogether, and only on January 7th began to electrify their mile. What the "Man in the street" wants to know is, who is to blame for this muddle? In the meantime the most long-suffering suburb of any continues to suffer. For 21 years our steam trams were an intolerable nuisance and the single line difficulties spoil thousands of tempers; whilst to-day we can only sigh for the good old days of Mayner's and Allsop's four-horse 'buses and their glorious gallops from Perry Barr to town via Alma Street and Summer Lane in twenty minutes. - Yours etc.,

BIRCHFIELD
Jan 15th., 1907

dark pink ticket, not easy to copy, so the text on the back is reproduced in a panel above:

In what season was George Robey in Jack & the Beanstalk at the Prince of Wales, Birmingham, please?

David Harman and Roger Atkinson

December 23rd., 1891

To the Editor of the *Daily Post*

THE PERRY BARR TRAMS

Sir, - Will you kindly grant me a little space to comment upon the peculiar management in working the above service. For instance, this morning, No.16 tram from Witton, due at the Old Square about 9.15, arrived some twenty minutes late. This serious delay is accounted for by instructions given to drivers to wait at certain crossings for, say, two trams to pass. One came to its proper time, but the other was fifteen minutes before making its appearance - both trams were empty, of course - keeping the Witton, and also a Perry Barr tram waiting this length of time, both these being full of passengers anxious to get in time to their several businesses. The interval was utilised by the conductor No.414 passing the collecting-box round for a Christmas supper. Foggy weather and break-down may be excused, but the idiotic system of allowing full trams in the morning to wait for return empties must be apparent to a long-suffering public on this route. Surely this can be remedied at least.

SEASON

Hampton Road, December 22.

December 1st., 1895

To the Editor of the *Daily Post*

TRAMCARS - RATE OF SPEED

Sir, - Will you allow me to utter a protest against the manner in which the Central Company run their trams on the Perry Barr line? In the first place, they can hardly be said to run at all, so slowly do they travel, and the journey includes so many stoppages that I have known juveniles keep by the side of a car the whole way without suffering any inconvenience. Secondly, when they do crawl they do not do so regularly, but appear to start from the Perry Barr end just when guard and driver can make it convenient to do so, without any regard for public convenience. Trusting this will cause the necessary alterations to be made, I thank you in anticipation for this insertion. I have heard of a gentleman who saw his wife into the tram at Six Ways and walking to Perry Barr, had to wait her arrival. This I know, could be frequently the case.

A DAILY TRAVELLER

Blackpool Honeymoon

My Aunt Amanda lived in Brow Lane, Shelf, looked after by her daughter, my cousin Lily. As my father had been the youngest of nine children and Amanda the eldest, there were huge age disparities between cousins in the next generation. Lily was born in 1894; I was a child of well into the 20th century.

In 1929, Lily met Walter, who lived "on Buttershaw". Walter was an unemployed roller coverer. Roller coverers had stitched, very tightly, new leather coverings around rollers in mills. But during the Great War, when Walter was spending most of the time in the army in Mesopotamia, the "old ways" had proved too slow and labour intensive for mills on war production. Galvanized rubber or other substitutes, had replaced leather on rollers, so Walter's skill had been redundant in the post-war world. Aunt Amanda had no time for Walter: "Tha't noan bahn to 'ave that man ovver t' threshold". Lily was not unemployed. She had a good job as a coal money collector for Jabez Cole (Coal) Ltd of Springmill Street, Bradford. Lily eventually found Walter a job as a storeman with Grattan Warehouses, a very early mail order enterprise. But even a wage-earning Walter remained persona non grata at the house in Brow Lane.

Devoted readers may dimly recall that they have met my cousin Lily and Aunt Amanda once before – on pages 23-24 of *Newsletter 44* – at New Year 1942, when I had travelled from Clitheroe to Shelf principally by train, not having yet been to the opera in Burnley. It turned out to be the last time that I would see old Aunt Amanda in her matriarchal rocking chair; she died in February 1942.

This left Lily free to do two things. Walter had been courting her for nearly thirteen years; she was now free to marry him. (Attitudes were rather different in those days; patience was a virtue). Also, Lily could look after me in school holidays. She had no competence to be my guardian; but my guardian, Mrs Mann, who brilliantly arranged my schooling and eking out the money apportioned to me as a Ward of Court, had no competence whatever in domestically caring for me. Without, as far as I am aware, their meeting to arrange this, Lily and Mrs Mann adopted their respective roles in my upbringing.

Lily and Walter married one Saturday at the end of August, whilst I was still on holiday from boarding school; so I went with them on their honeymoon. Wartime – so you could not go to Bridlington, Scarborough or Torquay, all banned areas. It had to be Blackpool, Morecambe or New Brighton. So after the wedding celebrations, we caught the Hebble bus down to Halifax, struggled with our luggage down to Halifax Old Station, caught the train to Manchester Victoria and then a non-corridor and utterly packed train to Blackpool. At Blackpool station, we had immediately to queue for 'train regulation' tickets to get a place (not a seat) on a train back to Manchester the following Saturday. Wartime – Lily and Walter were lucky to get a honeymoon; but they had been waiting since 1929, so they deserved the bonus of getting into a boarding house in Blackpool as well.

Suffice to say that I have always had a soft spot for Blackpool ever since; there is nowhere like that place. But I was a teenager developing an interest in buses, so when, in 1943, Lily and Walter again booked digs for a week in Blackpool (again with me), I used my knowledge and influence to suggest that we went by bus. It couldn't have been worse than going by train. Marginally, it wasn't.

On to the Hebble again at the top of Brow Lane, but we caught the hourly Leeds – Burnley working, 3/9d each, return Brow Lane to Burnley. We had to get off the double-decker in Albion Street, Halifax and walk round the corner to the waiting single-decker in Carrier Street. As through-booked passengers we had priority; passengers from Halifax were not allowed on in Carrier Street, but had to wait at Wards End for the bus. Then that wonderful ride up to Heptonstall Slack and over Blackshaw Head, far better than rail-side scenery. Then, for Burnley Cattle Market, please refer back to *Newsletter 44*, p.24.

Another wartime stricture, which many ordinary folk took (like rationing) as something else to be got around, was the government's "Is Your Journey Really Necessary?", and the measures taken to make travel even more difficult than wartime shortages already made it. Before the war, Ribble ran a bus, every 20 minutes I think, from Burnley to Blackpool, but the Commissars had insisted that the route be split at Preston. And, of course, had forbidden all express services to Blackpool (or anywhere else). But that famed wartime spirit prevailed – strive to overcome what the-powers-that-be say you should, or should not, do. On Saturdays, Ribble put half the buses that they could possibly muster on to the Burnley – Blackburn – Preston service, and other half of all the buses that they could muster, on Preston – Blackpool. So the huge, suitcase-accompanied queues in Burnley Cattle Market for Preston, then in Tithebarn Street, Preston, for Blackpool, were cleared by packed lowbridge double-deckers (rows of four seats all the way along the upper deck with a sunken gangway on the right). At the end of the journey, you had Blackpool – "Fresh air and fun!", servicemen on leave, Lancashire and Yorkshire folk on holiday, the Tower, the sea, the sands, the promenade, the piers, Yates's Wine Lodge (not for me), "The original Gipsy Rose Lee", the Corporation's bizarre 1930s-style buses – and their trams to Fleetwood (and more ancient ones to Marton as well, in 1943).

For me personally, the icing even had a cherry on it; and I had savoured it in Preston. When we at last reached the front of the queue in Tithebarn Street, it was a Scout, not a Ribble, that had nosed on to the stand. Scout Motor Services shared the Preston – Blackpool service with Ribble. That clinched it for me. I had no subsequent hope of divorcing myself from buses.

Roger Atkinson