

# Newsletter

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The Roads and Road Transport History Association

[www.rrtha.org.uk](http://www.rrtha.org.uk)

## Re-inventing the Wheel

Roy Larkin

For centuries the wheel had proved efficient by simply rolling along carrying myriad vehicles for the carriage of people and freight.

Around the turn of the century, Bramah Joseph Diplock had established and owned the Pedrail Transport Company in Fulham, London. Here he developed a wheel that walked, rather than rolled, giving it the ability to traverse soft ground, clamber over rocks or climb steps.

Built by the Pedrail Transport Company of Fulham, London, the wheel had 14 feet mounted around its rim. Ball and sockets allowed the feet to swivel, allowing each foot to be flat on the ground for as long as possible.

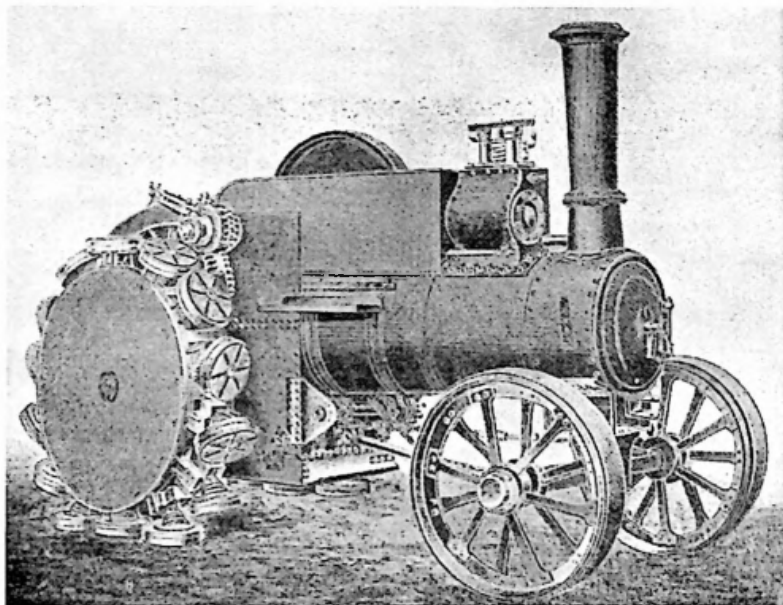
In 1904 it was inspected by Professor Hele-Shaw of Liverpool University's Engineering Department who reported that he 'drove it up a mountain near Stoke-on-Trent, throwing big stones in its path, which the feet simply set themselves at an angle and stepped over.'

Diplock had also sufficiently interested the Mechanical Transport Committee of the War Office for them to arrange their own trial in November 1904, using a standard Foster engine fitted with Pedrails built by Foster to Diplock's specification.

This trial commenced at the Foster works in Lincoln and ended 5 days later at Biggleswade, some 90 miles distant. The MTC reported that to begin with the vehicle was almost silent but after a while the feet of the Pedrail clattered a lot.

The first day it averaged 2 mph with a maximum of 3.5 mph, with the day proving uneventful. On the second day, a maximum of 4.5 mph was achieved, though two of the clutches which allowed the feet to take up their proper position came loose and were severely bent,

needing replacement at Sleaford. On the third day, no more than 2 mph was achieved and all the clutches except two needed replacement at Peterborough. The final two days to Biggleswade saw 3.5 mph being achieved.



*Diplock's Pedrail mounted to a Foster Engine - RLC Museum*

The trial included soft ground and swamp. The Pedrail proved no better than a W&S Engine on soft ground and in the swamp, a Doll engine fitted with spuds to a single wheel travelled 100 yards further than the Pedrail before becoming bogged down.

At this point, Diplock withdrew from the trial and the MTC concluded that his invention showed no improvement over an ordinary type of traction engine.

Despite this apparent failure, further trials were conducted. Whether these were official ones arranged by the MTC or arranged privately by Diplock is, as yet, unknown. The only evidence for them is a number of photographs, which show the Pedrail apparently undergoing field trials.

**President**

**Professor John Hibbs O.B.E.**  
Copper Beeches  
134 Wood End Road  
Erdington  
Birmingham  
B24 8BN  
*jahibbs2@hotmail.com*

**Chairman**

**Grahame Boyes**  
7 Onslow Road  
Richmond  
TW10 6QH  
*g.boyes1@btinternet.com*

**Secretary**

**Peter Jaques**  
21 The Oaklands  
Droitwich  
WR9 8AD  
*pjaques@live.co.uk*

**Treasurer**

**John Howie**  
37 Balcombe Gardens  
Horley  
RH6 9BY  
*mygg37@tiscali.co.uk*

**Research Co-ordinator**

**Tony Newman**  
21 Ffordd Argoed  
Mold  
CH7 1LY  
*toekneenewman@googlemail.com*

**Academic Adviser**

**Professor John Armstrong**  
Thames Valley University  
St Mary's Road  
London  
W5 5RF

**Editor**

**Roy Larkin**  
19 Burnley Close  
Tadley  
RG26 3NQ  
01189 817924  
*Roy.rrtha@historicroadways.co.uk*

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## Editorial

Welcome to the December Newsletter. I hope you enjoy it.

I am particularly pleased to be able to offer you the article by Phil Sposito, which continues the BRS theme and also marks the century of Bristol vehicles.

Phil is the foremost authority on Bristol vehicles with his book 'Bristol Goods Vehicles'.

Thanks are also due to Garry Turvey for his article marking 50 Years of Motorways and all the other contributors.

The lifeblood of your Newsletter is your input. Quite simply, it needs your letters, articles and comment. Your additional information and corrections to any article are important and looked forward to.

If you have the article, let me have it. If you have the information but don't feel like writing it, let me know and I'm certain that something can be

arranged.

Members' Forum brought a good response to questions, but where were the new queries for December?

Without your input, you'll be stuck with mine, but it is your Newsletter, not mine, so I'd much prefer your questions to ensure that Members' Forum continues its promising start.

Research Matters. It really does, not a single word is written without research. Research facilities are changing just as rapidly as the speed technology races ahead.

Research Matters is intended as a regular new column to share research experiences, tell members of new sources discovered and unravel the mysteries of existing archives.

As with Members' Forum, its success and usefulness depends on you. Don't be shy with sharing and helping other members in their research.

## Contents

Re-inventing the Wheel .....	1
From the Chairman .....	3
Members' Meeting .....	3
BRS Bristols .....	4
Research Matters .....	6
Fifty Years of Motorways .....	7
Coventry Transport Museum's New Archive .....	9
Scammell Register Silver Jubilee .....	10
Early Days on the Buses .....	11
Work of the Research Co-ordinator .....	16
Holidays at Butlins .....	17
Members' Forum .....	18
Book Reviews .....	19
Letters to the Editor .....	20

## From the Chairman

Grahame Boyes

Sadly, the Research Workshop advertised in Newsletter 55 had to be cancelled because of the very disappointing number of bookings. With hindsight, a workshop so similar to the one held in Leeds a year earlier may have been misconceived, even if the preparations for it had not been disrupted by the upheaval that I mentioned in NL55. However, the mood at our last Committee meeting was much more positive than for some months and we are intent on recovering the previous momentum.

I was most gratified to receive two responses to my appeal for a new webmaster. The offer from Nigel Furness to host the website, as well as to act as webmaster, has been gratefully accepted. By the time you read this the site may well have been brought up to date. It is then intended that each month it will carry one or two different articles from past Newsletters.

The secretary needs to be able to plan ahead for the members' meetings in 2009. All members are asked either to offer themselves as a speaker or to suggest the name of a non-member who would make an interesting speaker. Papers may have reached the stage where they could be suitable for subsequent publication in the Newsletter, but this is not essential. 'Work-in-progress'

and tentative papers that invite comment, additional information or discussion are also welcome. Although papers are typically 30–45 minutes in length, short contributions of 10–20 minutes are also invited.

The Commercial Vehicle Show now has a policy of attracting historical exhibitors. We are aiming to have a R&RTHA presence at next year's show, which is to be held on 29 & 30 April at the National Exhibition Centre. At this stage the secretary is collecting provisional expressions of interest from members who might be willing to combine a visit to the show on one of these days with some time on the Association's stand.

The Association's publicity brochure, which also serves as a membership prospectus, has been updated and fresh supply printed. If you could use some yourself, or if you can suggest an organisation that could be asked to circulate copies to their membership, or museums/libraries that might put copies on display, please contact the Secretary.

Finally, I am pleased to say that subscriptions remain unchanged for 2009. A renewal form is enclosed and the treasurer looks forward to receiving your payment.

## September Members' Meeting

Roy Larkin

Held on Saturday 27th September the Members' Meeting at the Coventry Transport Museum attracted a variety of speakers and subjects.

After Grahame had apprised the assembled members as to the current business of the Association, it was time for the meeting proper.

Mike Eyre started with a most interesting and enlightening presentation about the Manchester trolleybus controversy and the conflict between Stuart Pilcher for the bus company and Manchester City Council.

The Council favoured trolleybuses, Pilcher favoured diesel buses. The Council favoured local industry (Crossley), Pilcher AEC.

With politics and personalities seemingly playing a more important part than public service, the trolleybus system went live on 4th January 1938.

Tony Newman then entertained us with extracts from 'Song of the Road', one of the BBC Radio Ballads, first broadcast in 1959. This featured the sounds, interviews

and music from some of the 19,000 men involved with building the M1 motorway.

After lunch, Grahame Boyes gave a presentation on the value of Road Freight Year Books for research. They can provide valuable information on company directors and finances, the type of work engaged in, the size and even make-up of their fleets. Successive editions provide information as to changes of premises and when companies ceased to be listed.

Tony drew extensively on National Archive files to provide a history of the Dartford Tunnel Cycle Service. To provide safe passage for cyclists through the tunnel a converted Ford Thames Trader carried the cycles in bicycle racks on the lower deck with their owners on the upper deck. Five buses were used on the service, remaining in use until 1965 before being sold to a Wolverhampton dealer in 1966.

As ever, the meeting provided both variety and interest and the chance to catch up with other members.

The next meeting will be the AGM on March 21st 2009 with everybody receiving a warm welcome.

## BRS Bristols

Phil Sposito  
(Courtesy CVRTC)

Bristol built its first motor bus chassis in 1908 after a less than perfect experience with makes they had bought in. Many early chassis were also bodied as lorries until the late 1920s when the chassis built were no longer suitable for use as lorries. Bristol eventually became part of the Thomas Tilling Group which became a nationalised concern following the 1947 Transport Act and the formation of the British Transport Commission (BTC). The BTC was responsible for all transport but was soon split up with the new Road Haulage Executive (RHE), becoming responsible for road haulage under the British Road Services (BRS) name. The body building firm of Eastern Coachworks at Lowestoft was also nationalised and Bristol already had strong connections with them. BRS had inherited a mixed fleet of all vehicle makes, old and new, large and small, good and bad from the numerous hauliers it had taken over.

### The Bristol HG

Plans were drawn up by BRS for a new maximum capacity vehicle that would bring a degree of standardisation into the fleet for easier maintenance and spares supply. The job of building it was passed to Bristol. The vehicle was to be a 22 ton gross eight-wheeler, for which Bristol's own engine was found to be underpowered, so the Leyland 9.8 litre 600 engine was chosen to power it. This was the same engine used in the Leyland Octopus which was also being purchased.

The chassis was designated the HG6L (Heavy Goods 6-cylinder Leyland) and was 29 ft long. Power was transmitted through a clutch, 5-speed gearbox and rear axle of Bristol manufacture. A single-drive bogie was seen as adequate which many drivers must have cursed when stuck with wheel spin. The top line of the chassis swept upwards towards the rear of the cab, reducing the depth of sub-frame needed under the platform body.

The heavy stampings for the first chassis were ordered in early 1951 but, due to changes and delays, it was March 1952 before the first chassis was ready for testing. All Bristol chassis were assembled side by side with bus chassis in buildings that were earlier used by the main importer of REO chassis for the same purpose. Chassis were built in batches known as sanctions, with the first chassis in each sanction numbered 001. The first vehicle, 88-001, had 24 volt electrics and Westinghouse air

pressure brakes and joined East Bristol Depot of BRS in November 1952. The vehicle weighed just under 7.5 tons.

The first (88<sup>th</sup>) sanction consisted of 200 vehicles and the cabs were by Eastern Coachworks, Burlingham, Metro Cammell-Weymann and Holmes, who built just one, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> chassis. This cab together with the flat body was built of all aluminium, which reduced the weight by almost 7cwt, compared with the same Eastern Coachwork items. It is not known why it was nearly 2 years before Holmes built any more cabs. All the cabs looked very similar and must have been built to BRS specification.

The platform bodies were built by Eastern Coachworks, Holmes, Star and Bristol themselves. Vehicles of the first sanction had no speedometer, but a warning light flickered into life when the 20mph speed limit was reached. A mileage recorder was fitted to the side of the chassis for maintenance purposes.



*Bristol HG with cardboard 'cab heater'.*

A change in specification started a new sanction and a total of five were built. In 1955, Bristol introduced its own cab which was of aluminium, apart from the roof and curved panels which were glass fibre mouldings, perhaps the first time this material had been used on such a scale. These cabs can be recognised by the straight bottom of the windscreens. The weight of the Bristol cab and platform body was around 15cwt, bringing the vehicle weight down to around 6.75 tons, giving a 15.25 ton payload.

Bristol later designed a replacement cab of all glass fibre construction but shut down their bodyworks when only a few had been made. The moulds were passed to Longwell Green Coachworks of Bristol for continued production. In March 1956 an HG chassis was fitted with cam-operated brakes of Bristol's own design and was retained for use by the experimental department.

In 1957, it was also fitted with a new design of rear suspension that was later used on the Bristol Semi-Trailer. It was fitted with a Self Changing Gears automatic gearbox and after months of testing, passed to BRS in November 1958, the last HG delivered to them. Many changes were made to the HG during production, including cab mountings, handbrake, fuel tanks, brakes and drive shafts. Many HGs had a fourteen year life span and some had to have cracked chassis plated over.

With no protection, the front of the cab often had a well battered appearance. Photos often show cabs with fronts that have been repaired as a one-off in some far flung depot. Nearly all HGs were flat platforms but some were built with sideboards and were used on the contracts for steel companies where the different liveries also added a bit of variety. Three were built to carry demountable carboys and several had van bodies. Perhaps the most well known contract HGs were the Pilot bodied tippers in British Sugar Corporation livery.

At the end of their lives many HGs were loaded on the back of each other and driven off to auction and some found use with private operators. Their day had passed compared with the new, more powerful, faster, power-steered vehicles available, but it had done its share of moving the nation's freight for 17 years. A total of 517 HGs were built over 5 years.

### The Bristol HA

The HA (Heavy Articulated) tractor unit was designed to take advantage of the new 24 ton weight limit for a four-axle vehicle. The HA and its ST (Semi-Trailer) were designed as a matched pair for maximum efficiency as artics were proving they were the way forward in road haulage. The prototype HA and trailer was built in the autumn of 1954 and much testing was carried out without a cab fitted because the new design of Bristol cab was not ready. Only 10 of these cabs were fitted before the Bristol bodyworks closed and these can be recognised by the lack of water filler caps on the front.

The HA used the same Leyland 600 engine (HA6L) as the HG. The clutch, gearbox and axle were also the same. The prototype HA6L had Girling brakes and was

handed over to BRS in May 1955 for testing on the London-Manchester trunk route. Production HA6Ls used Bristol's own cam-operated brakes as tested on the experimental HG.

A major change came in April 1960 with the introduction of a lengthened chassis powered by a Gardner 6LX engine (HA6G). Gear ratios were revised and a higher axle ratio increased top speed to 35 mph. The cab was also lengthened by a few inches to accommodate this engine. The Gardner engine was soon replaced with a Leyland 680 engine (HA6LL). Another change of axle ratio increased the top speed to 39 mph and production continued until December 1961. During this time changes were made to the window mountings, front grille and bumper size.



*Bristol HAs outside the Bristol works*

In April 1961 the final style of cab was introduced. Again built by Longwell Green, it was constructed from colour impregnated glass fibre mouldings and featured very deep windscreens giving excellent vision. The traditional front grille was also replaced with horizontal louvers. January 1962 saw the HA revert back to an HA6G. This was fitted with a David Brown gearbox which gave a top speed of 43 mph. Bristol announced the development of their own 6-speed gearbox but it never went into production.

The final HA6G was delivered to BRS in January 1964. All but a few Bristol ST trailers were bodied by Longwell Green, located several miles from the Bristol works. Bristol had an old bus chassis with a half-cab that had been used for testing new units. A fifth wheel coupling was fitted to the rear of this to deliver the trailer chassis. This was soon deemed to be over length by the authorities, so an HA was retained by Bristol, painted in its own colours, for delivering trailers. This was eventually sold to a local haulier, thus becoming the only HA not supplied to BRS. 653 HAs were built in fourteen sanctions over nine and a half years.

## The ST Semi-Trailer

The early trailers were 24 ft long and 7 ft 6 in wide with wheeled landing gear that retracted rearwards. This was soon replaced with vertically rising legs with flat feet. The axles were the same as the trailing axle on the HG, as was the leaf spring suspension. In 1957 the suspension was replaced with the equalising beam type, tested on an HG. The length was also increased to 26 ft.

The STs were bodied by Longwell Green except for 10 that were fitted with a sunken well for coiled steel; and several were fitted with van bodies. Just one was bodied as a bulk grain carrier. A total of 946 trailers were built over nine and a half years. Early trailers weighed around 3 ton 13 cwt and this was later reduced to 3 ton 5cwt.

## Research Matters The Internet Bookshop

Roy Larkin

The Internet certainly can't replace the traditional second-hand bookshop. The computer screen simply doesn't have the ambience, or the excitement of never knowing if the long sought after book might be found, or the bargain that can't be resisted.

The Internet does, however provide an increasingly wide range of book dealers. Long established traditional shops now vie with dealers in warehouses, garages and back bedrooms, whose only accessibility is via the Internet.

I have bought books that I didn't know existed from sellers that I'd never have found in towns I'd never visit from throughout the UK, America, Canada, in fact anywhere worldwide.

A recent visit to the Royal Logistics Corps Museum archives turned up several books full of information. Two of those books, published in 1920 and hitherto unknown, now rest on my shelves, courtesy the Internet.

My first port of call for browsing is the auction site, Ebay ([www.ebay.co.uk](http://www.ebay.co.uk)). Ebay is arranged by categories to make searching easier. Select the main 'Books' category. From there, it is simply a case of refining your search to suit and then saving it, using the 'save search' facility. Each time you use Ebay, your saved search will be available, allowing instant access to your particular interests. I have several searches saved and in a few minutes can search the categories I am interested in. When a particular book takes your interest it can be saved to your 'watch list' where its progress can be monitored. The search facility can also be used to find individual authors or titles.

For me, the main advantage of Ebay is the number of books I now own that I wouldn't have even dreamed existed. The possibility of picking up a bargain exists, but it is dangerous to assume that it is a bargain just because it is on Ebay. I've seen books sell for £35 on Ebay and then bought the same book elsewhere for £15!

Once a title has been identified as of interest, I search for

it on UKBookWorld ([www.ukbookworld.com](http://www.ukbookworld.com)). This website consists of numerous bookshops and dealers who are mainly UK businesses. The search facility for either title or author, both, or ISBN reveals within seconds which book sellers have the particular book for sale.

Then I do the same search on AbeBooks ([www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com)). This search engine works the same as UKBookWorld, but includes booksellers worldwide.

The final search is Amazon ([www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)), although it's rare to find a book on Amazon that isn't listed on the others, usually by the same seller. Amazon isn't only new books, many second hand book dealers now have shops on Amazon.

These searches reveal the availability of any book discovered on Ebay, or in research libraries, and the costs. This determines the value of the Ebay item and whether or not it is worth bidding for.

Both search engines provide details of the seller, always with email contact and often with phone contact. A quick phone call often reduces the price as the seller isn't paying the commission charged by the search engine.

Whatever the outcome of any search on UKBookWorld, I always check AbeBooks. A recent search for a book I bought on the mid-1970s revealed just one copy on UKBookWorld at over £100, but at least a dozen with American book dealers with a best price of just £20. That leaves plenty of margin for postage costs. Don't be put off by the thought of post and packing from other countries. I have bought often from USA, Europe and Australia and every time I am reminded just how expensive Royal Mail is.

The Internet is excellent for valuing books on the shelves. I check regularly and find books I paid £15 for when new are now worth £60 or more now they have been out of print a few years. The Internet provides the evidence for the insurance companies.

# Fifty Years of Motorways

Garry Turvey

The opening by the Prime Minister of Britain's first motorway, the Preston by-pass, on 5th December 1958 must rank as one of the most memorable and significant events in transport history.

I remember it well because, within a few hours of the opening, I was driving along it in my far from robust 1931 Morris 8. My recollections of that evening are vivid to this day. The worry as to whether my 'old banger' would manage to complete the eight and a quarter miles from Bamber Bridge to Broughton. The acute feeling of loneliness. The enormous road signs. The extreme darkness because, as I recall, there were only lights at the Samlesbury interchange and the relief when rejoining the familiar A6.



*Garry's 1931 Morris 8 'old banger'.*

It was a journey I was to undertake more or less each weekend for the next fifteen months, save for the short period soon after the opening when the motorway had to be closed because of frost damage. It is difficult to comprehend the contrast between those days and the hectic non-stop deluge of traffic of today.

But why motorways and why Preston? To answer those questions you have to go back into history, in fact further back than you might imagine because it was on 11th May 1900 that Arthur Balfour, who was to become Prime Minister two years later, said in the House of Commons, 'I sometimes dream that in addition to railways and tramways, we shall see great highways constructed for rapid motor traffic and confined to motor traffic....'.

He did not dream alone because in 1906 the London-Brighton Motorway Bill was presented to Parliament seeking authorisation for the construction of a road solely for motor traffic between London and Patcham.

As with other such private initiatives which were to follow, the intention was that the motorway should be financed by tolls, but it ran into strong opposition, especially from the railways and the concept remained a dream.

That, however, didn't stifle hope with luminaries of the day such as Lord Montagu and William Rees Jeffreys losing no opportunity to keep the idea in the public eye.

Inevitably, the 1914-1918 war meant that minds and resources were occupied elsewhere, but in 1923 another Private Bill was presented to Parliament. This proposed the construction of a 110 mile, tolled motorway between Coventry and Salford, but the Government was not prepared to give the concept its support and it failed.

However, in 1937 the Lancashire County Council put forward a scheme for a motorway to be constructed, at the public's expense, to run from Carnforth in the north of the county to Warrington in the south with an option for a southbound extension. Again this failed to make progress, but the work undertaken at that time was to prove to be invaluable some twenty years later.

At the same time the County Surveyors Society produced plans which envisaged a possible 1000 mile motorway network, but perhaps the most significant event in the years

running up to the Second World War was a study tour to Germany, with over 200 participants, organised by the County Surveyors Society, the AA and the RAC and the now defunct British Road Federation.

Inevitably, the enthusiasm, not to say excitement, generated by that visit was soon overtaken by world shattering events, but the next steps along the route to motorways did in fact occur during the war, led by none other than the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill.

On 31st July 1941 he issued a Minute to the Government's Post War Reconstruction Committee in which he said, 'I want a complete policy worked out to cover the whole of transport, in all its modes: air, sea, road, railway, the lot and I want motorways thought about for the roads'.

Over the next few years the pressing issues of the day did not prevent serious consideration of the nation's infrastructure requirements. The Government worked in close collaboration with such bodies as the Institution



of Civil Engineers, The County Surveyors Society and the motoring organisations under the broad direction of the Post War Reconstruction Committee and identified 'the provision of motorways as one of the most important matters for consideration'.

So when the war was over much of the early groundwork had been completed, paving the way for the passing of the Special Roads Act on 11th May 1949. Unfortunately the existence of the necessary legislation did not lead to early action, primarily because of the familiar problem of lack of finance.

However, in 1953, the Minister of Transport announced that the construction of the Preston by-pass was to be included in an expanded road programme. In February 1955 a new Minister of Transport, the Rt Hon Harold Watkinson, whose drive and enthusiasm for motorways was a telling factor, laid Orders before Parliament for the construction of the Preston and Lancaster by-passes. The choice of Preston as the first motorway was heavily influenced by three factors.

First the Lancashire County Council plans were well advanced having regard to all the work which had been undertaken both before and immediately after the war. Secondly there was ample evidence of severe congestion in the area and finally, but perhaps the most important factor of all, was the enthusiasm and perseverance of Sir James Drake.

He was the County Surveyor and Bridgemaster from 1945 to 1972 and had long been an advocate of the economic, social and safety benefits of motorways. Remarkably, by current standards, the actual construction period for the eight and a quarter mile road was surprisingly short.

Tenders were invited early in 1956 and contracts were signed in June of that year allowing for an estimated two year construction period. Bad weather in the early months led to some delays but 58 years after Balfour's dream, Britain had its first stretch of motorway.

Initially, work proceeded at a rapid rate and over one thousand miles were completed between 1958 and 1972. Then, as the following figures show, construction slowed with the following mileages being added to the network decade by decade.

1958-68	549
1968-78	938
1978-88	371
1988-98	230
1999-07	20

In England the counties of Cornwall, Dorset, East Sussex, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Northumberland and Suffolk still do not have any motorway, whilst West

Sussex can claim only twelve miles.

Commitments for an expansion of the road network made by successive governments such as in 'Roads for Prosperity' (1989) were not honoured and now Britain has one of the lowest lengths of motorway per head of population in the whole of the Western Europe as anyone who travels on our overcrowded network knows only too well.

Yet few, if any, would deny that they are a vital component of the nation's infrastructure. They are proven to be our busiest, safest and fastest roads. They are testimony to the skills of our designers, architects and civil engineers. Their economic value is well chronicled.

In his Henry Spurrier Memorial Lecture given to the then Chartered Institute of Transport in March 1995, Professor Sir Christopher Foster claimed that 'the M25 (is) probably the most successful high return, large, British investment of recent years'. That view, applied to motorways and other major transport infrastructure schemes has been echoed many times, most recently in the 2006 Eddington Transport Study.

'There is clear evidence that a comprehensive and high performing transport system is an important enabler of sustained economic prosperity, a 5% reduction in travel time for all businesses and freight travel on the roads could generate a £2.5 billion of cost savings - some 0.2% of GDP

Transport corridors are the arteries of domestic and international trade

The economic case for targeted new infrastructure is strong and offers very high returns - the best schemes offer returns in the region of £5-£10 for each pound invested'

So why, when the evidence is so compelling, have we lost the momentum?

Why, as Sir Peter Baldwin asked when he addressed our 2004 Conference, did Government change from enthusiastic support for motorway construction to an apparent aversion of the very word?

The answer lies in a claimed lack of finance and a certain lack of political will linked to a growing and understandable concern for our environment. However, all too often, genuine concern has been exaggerated and distorted beyond all reason by the press and self appointed 'experts'.

Recommendations, such as those of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (1994) were presented as a call for a complete moratorium on road



construction, when careful reading of the report showed that it said nothing of the sort.

At a lower level I am reminded of a talk given a few years ago by a lady representative of one of the environmental organisations. In seeking to justify her total abhorrence of motorways she quoted the case of an acquaintance who, following the completion of a new stretch of motorway, was able to visit her aged parents weekly rather than once a month as hitherto.

Whilst most people would consider that to be to the good in terms of welfare and family life, the speaker was so committed to the propaganda that new roads provide no benefit, but simply generate more traffic, that she could only criticise the caring daughter. An extreme case, maybe, but typical of the negativity that has engulfed the consideration of new transport infrastructure for the last twenty years.

We must respect serious environmental concerns, but

equally we must do whatever we can to ensure prosperity and social well-being in an increasingly competitive world. Efficient transport, across all modes, is an essential ingredient and to that end we must have the best possible infrastructure. What better way to celebrate and acknowledge the role played by our motorways than to use this fiftieth anniversary to re-ignite the construction programme?

Acknowledgements:

Many sources were consulted during the preparation of this article and they are all gratefully acknowledged. However, special mention must be made of the Motorway Archive Trust and the three volumes of 'The Motorway Achievement' which together contain a wealth of information much of which is provided by those in the best position of all to comment, namely those who actually designed and constructed the two thousand miles of British Motorways.

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## Coventry Transport Museum New Archive Service

Coventry Transport Museum has launched their new archive service

Even though their extensive archive is still undergoing a reorganisation, Coventry Transport Museum is pleased to announce that they are now able to throw open the doors to their collection of over one million items.

The Museum's archive reading room is open for anybody wishing to do their own research within the collection. For those who are unable to visit the Museum in person, an archive enquiry service has also been announced - let the Museum know what you want to find out about and if they have the relevant material, images or information available they will be able to do the research for you!

The archive is a fantastic resource for anyone interested in the history of Coventry's transport industry and the British transport industry in general. It includes a technical collection of manuals, production records and handbooks dating back to 1900, covering manufacturers such as Daimler, Hillman, Humber and Triumph; over 60,000 negatives and prints from Rootes Group companies and a photographic collection including cycling, motoring, motorcycling, factory life and historic scenes from Maudslay, Armstrong Siddeley, Lea Francis and many more.

Lizzie Hazlehurst, Archive & Information Curator said: "It's great to be able to offer this service to people and whilst we cannot guarantee we'll be able to find answers for everyone, we're really looking forward to helping

people out with their detective work!"

There is a small charge for access to the archives and appointments do need to be made to access the archive reading room. To do this and for further information on how the archive team can help you, please contact Lizzie Hazlehurst on 024 7623 4270 or by email: [lizzie.hazlehurst@transport-museum.co.uk](mailto:lizzie.hazlehurst@transport-museum.co.uk)

For further information please contact:

Emma Lay: [emma.lay@transport-museum.co.uk](mailto:emma.lay@transport-museum.co.uk) or Lucy Rumble: [lucy.rumble@transport-museum.co.uk](mailto:lucy.rumble@transport-museum.co.uk) Tel: 024 7623 4270

Coventry Transport Museum displays the largest collection of British road transport in the world and is one of a select few museums that have been 'designated' as collections of national importance.

The Museum is open every day of the week from 10am - 5pm (closed 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> December and 1<sup>st</sup> January). Admission is free.

The Coventry Transport Museum Archive enquiry service is non profit making and money raised from charges made cover the cost of employing a member of staff to undertake the research and to help the Museum purchase much needed conservation grade material to care for their collection.

Telephone: 024 7623 4270

Web: [www.transport-museum.com](http://www.transport-museum.com)

## Scammell Register Silver Jubilee

Mike Thomas

The Scammell Register is the organisation for anyone who owns, or has any interest in, this famous make of lorry and aims to:

Record the details of Members' vehicles.  
Help Members in any way we can.  
Ensure the Scammell legend lives on.

The Scammell Register was formed initially as The Scammell Tractor Register from an idea that the founder, Bill Bromidge, had at the Great Dorset Steam Fair back in 1983. Bill approached several Scammell owners, suggesting that a register should be formed to further the preservation and understanding of this famous marque as well as providing a forum for like-minded owners to support each other with information and friendship. The inaugural meeting was held in Honiton, Devon on the 12<sup>th</sup> November 1983.

The original Register was open to owners of Scammell tractors with bonnets built between 1922 and 1968 and recorded the details and known history of member's vehicles. Back in 1987, Bill asked for a meeting with the original group of people that started the Register with a view to updating the aims and extending the vehicle dates for inclusion, adding forward control tractors, and opening membership of the Register to Scammell enthusiasts that did not own vehicles. Agreement was reached on the vehicles and 'Associated Membership' was offered to non-vehicle owners.

Further evolution of the Scammell Tractor Register took place in 1992 when Jack Kimp was elected as the new Honorary Secretary supported by a Committee. At the same time the vehicle eligibility dates were extended to cover the whole manufacturing period of Scammell (1922-1988) and to include all products of the Scammell Works at Watford. Eventually, after a ballot of the members, the word Tractor was removed from the title. Since that time, it has been known as The Scammell Register.

From these humble beginnings, the Register has grown to over 300 members, in all parts of the UK and around the world including Holland, Italy, New Zealand, USA and Canada. While the largest proportion of our members own Scammells, many are ex-employees, ex-drivers, model makers, would-be owners or simply enthusiasts.

One aspect of the work of the Register is to build up an archive of Scammell related material. We have an extensive photographic archive with many original works photographs, often used to illustrate the four Newsletters which we publish each year. An extensive collection of manuals, including parts, workshop and drivers' manuals are stocked and made available as paper or disk copies to anyone who needs such information.



1970 Scammell Contractor in Pickfords livery - Roy Larkin

Another aspect of our activity is to assist owners to compile a history of their vehicles and obtain original, or at least age-related, registration numbers for their vehicles. We do this from the extensive collection of build sheets and lists of order numbers held in the archive of the Register and its members. Answers to requests for information on individual lorries or assistance with a particular aspect of restoration often appear in our Newsletter, as do stories of restorations and other items of interest both current and historic. One of our members is currently compiling a detailed history of Scammell, with emphasis on the engineering and design aspects of the lorries, and we have just published Part 9 in the July 2008 Newsletter, covering the period 1932 to 1936 and the Pioneer recovery and tank transporters.

Details of the Register, application forms, articles, photographs, merchandising, vehicles and spares for sale and wanted and contact details of the Committee Members who deal with specific aspects can be found on our website at [www.scammellregister.co.uk](http://www.scammellregister.co.uk)

Finally, an appeal - if anyone has any Scammell literature, photographs or other materials which they would wish to donate to our archives or let us borrow and scan, we would be extremely grateful. Please contact me at [mike@rushesfarm.co.uk](mailto:mike@rushesfarm.co.uk)

## Early Days on the Buses

David Allen

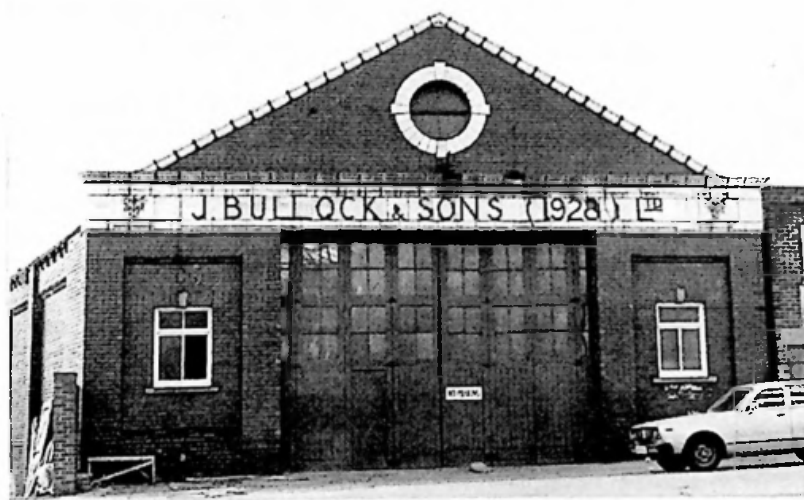
*The continuation of Bill Baines' recollections of his time with B&S Motor Services of Wakefield:*

### Part 2 Fares Please

#### B&S - Saville Street Garage

After applying for a job as a conductor, my response to the letter from B&S offering me a job was prompt. I presented myself at their garage in Saville Street, Wakefield and accepted the weekly wage of seventeen and sixpence, no paid overtime. It was agreed that I should commence duties on 1 January 1928.

The Saville Street garage was a five-minute walk from the city terminus stands. A multi-purpose building, it housed a private office, stores and general office, all rather cramped. A typed staff duty sheet, based on day-to-day morning and afternoon shifts was displayed outside.



*The Saville Street Garage*

Fleet maintenance was fully covered under one roof. A bus was parked over an inspection pit for full overhaul with mechanics, electricians, joiners and painters working side by side. The work schedule was timed to be completed on Saturday morning, when an exhaust pipe was connected leading to an outside wall outlet. The newly overhauled engine was started and left to run in over the weekend. Night cleaners were used as well as a shunter to check fluid levels.

Jim Bullock was head of the depot. He drove a blue Buick saloon with spoked wheels as seen in American gangster films. He appeared to be occupied elsewhere, leaving the day-to-day running to his two sons, Teddy and Harry.

Two drivers were sacked at the time I joined, for trying

to form a Union branch. West Riding Automobile Company took them both on.

### Training

The B&S had no conductor training school; therefore I was instructed to undergo training in my own time, carried out by conductors during normal hours on scheduled routes. Still working at Egglestones, I only had Wednesday afternoons and Sundays free.

My first training bus, an RAF Leyland No 44 single-decker picked me up at our front gate on Wednesday afternoon on its way to Wakefield. The conductor invested me with bag and punch, handed me his ticket rack, drawing my attention to the line of figures down each side of the tickets. These figures from one upwards were fare stage numbers, and it was important that the stage numbers were punched correctly.

My practical course in bus conducting was limited to tuition on selecting, and punching correctly appropriate tickets with the change giving under close scrutiny. I alternated my training sessions on the various routes in the Pontefract-Castleford areas. I was too young to conduct services operating out of Leeds as the minimum city age limit was 20.

Conductors briefed me on company rules 'on the job' - printed matter was non-existent - it was simply left to the discretion of inspectors. Failing to collect fares warranted suspension whilst the errant passenger went free.

Warnings or suspensions were given for; smoking en route, conductors sitting

with driver on open platform buses, punching tickets incorrectly, re-issuing used tickets which earned the sack if caught.

Having travelled on West Riding for years, learning to conduct was no problem; buses were part of my life. As I came to the end of my training sessions, it became apparent that I'd made the grade, as my instructors were content to sit back, enjoy the ride and talk to their girl friends. In due course I was to take the role of 'conductor instructor' and report on trainee suitability also.

I was instructed to attend the City Public Transport Licence Dept to collect my conductor's badge - a pear shaped object with 'City of Wakefield' embossed upon it and a number. Further instruction was given to collect a

uniform cap from a shop and a badge bearing the title, 'Motor B&S Service' was to be sewn on.

### Conducting Duty

A call at the bus garage office instructed me to start at 12.00 noon on Sunday for 'Specials,' which in those days meant manning 'duplicates'. I pedalled the five miles into Wakefield and reported in the garage to 'George'. I wandered around for a while and sat in a forward control AEC 411 single-decker parked up.

I was frozen hanging about until nearly 8.00pm. Then there was a call to arms with the voice of 'cloth cap' from the office giving me orders to collect punch, bag etc. The purpose was to collect inebriated New Year revellers and return to wherever we were scheduled to go.

'Cloth cap' was my driver, fully equipped and going through the routine of 'starting up a bus'. This involved opening the cab door, checking gear lever for neutral position, switching on ignition, followed by using the starting handle.

Both hands were required to take a grip on the brass handle applying pressure to engage the crankshaft. The handle was then turned until resistance was met, meaning that one cylinder was about to fire. Hopefully the engine started or, did not start and kicked back. Time to let go, as many wrists have been broken as engines kicked back.

Listening to the colourful rhetoric of my partner made me realise that I'd left the genteel ambience of a draper's emporium, to enter an exclusive man's world. The destination board was changed to 'Normanton'. We did two trips and arrived back at the garage at 10.45 pm. My first cashing in balanced.

On my way home over the cobbles, my oil lamp went out on the bike. After hard pedalling uphill, a bulky form emerged out of the darkness and said, 'nah then, what about this light?' The policeman checked it and I relit it, heard no more and settled down to my new life with the long, five mile bike ride to and from work.

RAF Leyland no.13 was a familiar bus to me now, as it was as a daily commuter for three years, and was typical of early 1920s bus design. The front entrance step was at a raised level, posing problems for tight skirts, and indicative of conversion from solid to pneumatic tyres.

Seats were in a form of brown imitation leather, generous in width and depth. Behind a glass panelled partition at the rear was the smoking compartment. It had four double seats, two, facing to the rear, with an emergency door central to the rear seats.

A leather thong, threaded through metal eyelets, ran the

whole length of the bus, ending at the signal bell immediately above the drivers head. Behind the driver was a windowless wooden partition with a rear-facing seat. This partition took the full thrust of the drivers back when declutching or braking, causing it to flex and actually lean on passengers, who pretended not to notice.

Seating capacity was 31, the odd number being a single seat to the left of the half-glass panelled door, opening outwards onto the driving position. The floor was covered in brown linoleum, a wet weather misery for the feet.

The destination indicator box, above the windscreen, was open at the front, with two opposing horizontal grooves. Into these grooves slid a wood framed rectangle of heavy duty black celluloid, with destination names stencilled in white, turning off-white with age.

Changing the destination board fell to the conductor, which meant climbing onto the mudguard to take up a sitting position on the engine bonnet. This was done with one hand carrying the destination board, with no available handhold for the other hand and at the same time hampered with a dangling bag and punch.

In the rain, it meant a wetting; in ice and snow, it was lethal. Destination boards were either a stubborn tight fit, or sloppily loose, which meant fixing them with a wad of newspaper.

In 1928, trams were still operating in Wakefield, therefore tram stops and fare stages were mandatory for both West Riding and B&S bus services. Beyond the city boundary, West Riding erected bus stop signs with designated fare stages when they launched their bus service on Easter Monday, 1922. Some of them were obviously planned on a cost effective basis, and not for passenger convenience.

However, these bus stops became superfluous when, in 1922, Bullocks introduced their competitive Wakefield-Pontefract service at reduced fares with a total disregard for the West Riding bus stops – more of a 'door to door' service.

After an abortive attempt to run B&S off the road, West Riding had no alternative but to reduce their fares and adopt the 'door to door' service. Beyond the city boundary, this became standard practice for both companies and caused no problems. Landmarks such as public houses tended to become unofficial bus stops. And so life on the 12 mph buses carried on.

During my first week of work, I learned of places to obtain cups of tea etc. One was a grocer in a parade of shops at the Airedale terminus, Castleford, purveyor of jugs of tea with two cups for three pence. During the

week with Driver Pearson I funded all the drinks. At the end of the week on a 'breakfast' run to Airedale and before sprinting to the grocer's shop, I asked Mr Pearson for three halfpence towards the jug of tea. I thought he was going to explode!

Actually he did, in language form: 'Hadn't I been told that conductors paid for the tea out of the fare takings, the shortage made good by re-issuing tickets left behind by passengers?' My reply was absolute refusal, and no, I had not been informed. Pearson was livid, still sat at the wheel, with the engine running. He ordered me to 'get off' which I did and stood at the curb edge. Mr Pearson drove off, stopping a few hundred yards away. I set off after no.13, climbed the steps and passed through the passenger door.

Fortunately there were no passengers aboard. Driver Pearson maintained a sullen silence throughout the shift and remained non-committal throughout the next week.

All B&S staff travelled free when off duty, with no identity pass other than a spoken 'staff' from complete strangers. At some time during my conducting days, free was altered to half fare, still with no I.D.

The Wakefield-Pontefract route was a 'post-training' introduction to public service vehicle driving. Following an application, drivers were taken out on a trial run with Jack Black, the Wakefield garage foreman. If suitable, they were then referred to Mr Lazenby, Wakefield's Public Transport Inspector, for a further road test. If they passed, a driver's licence was issued, followed by a chit from the B&S office for a cap. It was then left to conductors to teach the basics, i.e. arrival and departure times, breakfast and tea runs, and route operation in general.

On one occasion, leaving the garage at 6.00 am with Gotfredson 44, I was partnered by Driver Howard, a tall young man, with the build of an athlete, and a horseracing enthusiast. We were scheduled to pick up girls at Castleford for Montague Burtons in Leeds. He brought 44 to a halt at a newsagent shortly after leaving the garage in Saville Street and gave me a penny to purchase a copy of the Sporting Pink, the horse racing thesaurus. Handing it over to Howard, he asked me if I could drive. I answered 'yes', based on tuition and practical training at the wheel of an Austin Seven. Howard's reaction was 'tek awer this while I study form'.

I got behind the wheel, headed for Stanley Road, and drove as far as Methley, with Howard sat beside me, studying form. I took over every morning, without fear of Inspectors, as Wakefield to Methley was not a B&S route. At the end of the week, I could quote that 'I drove my first bus at the age of seventeen, albeit illegally and unofficially. I was not the only conductor wearing

unseen 'L' plates - a topic definitely top secret.

We picked up a seated load at Castleford, mostly teenage girls and all with contracts. Inured to the ways of the working world much more than I was, I became fair game, unable to hide my blushes. Not being able to conduct within the Leeds City boundary, I dropped off at Crown Point and waited for Howard to return.

The Leeds City Traffic Inspector had a habit of appearing at the terminus in time to see a B&S bus unloading without a conductor. The driver gave a variety of answers on these occasions. I did not drive back because of the time limit.

A report/defect sheet was placed outside the office. One comment was, 'This bus requires a can of petrol and a box of matches'. The driver got the sack for that.



*City of Wakefield Driver's Badge*

### **My Share of Accidents**

RAF Leyland 13 was the object of an incident outside Wakefield one day on our last trip of the morning. Shakespeare was my driver. Workmen were laying kerbstones on our side of the road and a man with a red flag controlled one-way traffic. The red flag was against us.

Shakespeare took objection to the red flag, and became very abusive. He shouted his concern with regard to timekeeping. The red flag remained at red and our passengers maintained a stolid neutral. The driver engaged second gear and advanced on the man with the flag. There was the sound of splintering wood as the

front entrance steps of no.13 hit the raised kerbstones, tearing them away from the driver's platform.

Shakespeare had no option but to halt, abseil down what was left of the steps and pass the detached timber to me to make a neat pile of it inside of the bus. Both kerb and the man with the red flag remained unconcerned.

Our passengers, few in number, seeing the woodpile behind the door, were contemplating the means of escape at the terminus. I opened the rear emergency door at the terminus and, to my relief, saw our passengers safely out.

Leyland C5 no.15 had a Harrison (Dewsbury) body with a front entrance door, hinged flush with the body and two vertical steps. The door was very heavy and suicidal to open; on one occasion, I lost control of it when slowing to a stop. It left my hands, swung out, hit a lamppost and shattered the glass. Duly reported and no action was taken.

On the Pontefract-Loscoe service, there was either a Halley or Daimler CKA no.23. The Halley was one big rattle from one end to the other, while the Daimler was comparatively de-luxe.

The crossroads at North Featherstone was a problem as it was somewhat blind. There were no Halt signs at that time and many accidents occurred there.

The Daimler on one occasion hit one of our Leylands amidships. They arrived at the crossroads together from different directions. Damage was light; the only casualty was an elderly man with a bruised chest and slight shock. He refused help and went on his way.

Instructions were issued that from two of the directions, drivers had to stop to allow conductors to alight and confirm safe crossing by hand signal. In practice drivers were reluctant to stop and a hand wave from the conductor followed by a flying leap onto the steps of the moving vehicle, while groping for the handrail was the order of the day.

It happened to me on one journey. We stopped and I alighted and walked across the road, waving the driver over. I made a grab for the handrail, found it but missed the doorstep with my feet. I was dragged along the road, on the heels of my boots as far as the Sun Inn, which was a bus stop. Fortunately a waiting lady waved my driver down. I found my feet and in a state of mild shock, displayed my boots to the driver. No report was made but the grapevine told the tale.

Only a short time elapsed between the kerb drill and Shakespeare's demise as a B&S driver. He went out with a bang. There was a bad junction (Northgate) in Wakefield and he was on the way back to the garage for

a crew changeover. Conductors had to alight, walk forward to gain a clear view of traffic both ways (which included trams), then give clear instructions to the driver. Driver Shakespeare did this changeover only once, but never completed it in spite of my concise instructions.

I jumped out ran forward to signal the driver to stop but he failed and hit a flat back Ford T carrying a load of lead plates. The offside, front corner of the Ford's load hit the bus radiator – an AEC 411 – and split it in two. I looked for Shakespeare but he'd disappeared and I never saw him again.

I contacted the Ford driver, who was unhurt, and ran to Saville Street where I was asked to give a verbal report. My adherence to company rules was accepted without question.

Pineapple Hill was a relatively steep hill between Wakefield and Normanton. On one occasion Leyland PLSC (Lion) No.84 failed to take the bend at the bottom of the hill landing up in a field of turnips. We came across it with both driver and conductor standing sheepishly on guard.

### Brushes with the Law

In 1928 the legal requirement for standing passengers on a single-decker was a maximum of eight. The enforcement by the police of this law varied. At Wakefield termini, the police turned a blind eye. The same applied to Castleford.

In Pontefract, a couple of policemen took over the Wakefield stand at about 10.00 pm, when the public houses were being emptied. Pontefract pubs were well favoured by Featherstone miners, usually well oiled but never totally inebriated. They were coaxed, good humouredly, onto the bus but the police ignored the conductor's 'that's enough' with an encouraging 'room for another six!' On one Saturday night I punched eighty-four two-penny tickets, Pontefract to Featherstone, on Leyland 13.

However, Normanton police, with no thieves to catch, had nothing better to do than apprehend bus conductors with more than eight standing passengers. One policeman stood in the shadows watching passengers boarding and counting the standing number. If over the eight, he waited for the bus to leave and then flashed his lamp to his sergeant and colleague waiting round the corner further up the road to make a kill.

For the police it was a waste of manpower as it was so obvious. The trapping of conductors were one-off operations, carried out by sergeants assisted by constables as a means of asserting the sergeant's seniority.



I was involved in two overloadings. On the first occasion it was a load of Featherstone Rovers supporters travelling to watch their team play at Wakefield. A bus travelling in the opposite direction with news of a constable on a brow of a hill ahead waved us down.

I explained the situation to my passengers and suggested that, except five or six standing passengers, that they squeezed onto a seat or crouch down in the aisle. This they did, accompanied by uncomplimentary remarks on the British Bobby. The lookout policeman was taken by surprise. His colleague and sergeant, ready to make a stop signal remained motionless and followed our passage as we headed to Wakefield. On course in safer waters, I gave the all clear to my passengers and thanked them. They were jubilant at flouting the law, and voiced their elation.

Unfortunately on the second occasion there was no warning. We were flagged down not far from the position of our first encounter. The sergeant asked me how many passengers were standing to which I replied something about a busload. The constable joined us and reported a count of twenty, to which the sergeant added a provocative 'more like a train load'. Out came his notebook and pencil. My name address and badge number were taken. Fortunately the bus was a Leyland PLSC 1 Lion, not No.13, otherwise the standing count could have been higher. I gave a verbal report of the incident, but no further action was taken.



*Leyland PLSC3 Lion*

One winter's evening, arriving in Featherstone, a large party of ladies was waiting for us. Obviously a hen party, alive with badinage, some of it directed at the high bottom step stretching skirts to the limit. Taking their fares, I learned they were going to the Wakefield Playhouse or Opera House, in Westgate.

My driver was also curious as to where they were going. On being informed, he immediately offered to take them to the theatre in Westgate (off route and beyond the terminus) and would be able to collect them at about five minutes past eight. The ladies were delighted and

we repeated this 'off rota sheet' service on picking our passengers up.

I cannot remember the name of the driver, but he got away with this offbeat tourist trip. A report would have certainly meant the sack, with possibly my future at the B&S in question. As for our lady passengers, they lived in Featherstone, the bedrock of the B&S. Did Wilson Street (HQ) remain immune to 'clothes line' accounts of a bus going off course?

Winter fog was a problem, especially the solid black wall variety. Nos.13 and 44 were not equipped with fog lights. Conductors either sat on the nearside mudguard in an attempt to verbally guide the driver, or walked in front, keeping to the nearside with a handkerchief on the right shoulder.

On one such black night, we left Wakefield to arrive at Snydale Colliery very late. There was the usual party of afternoon shift workers for Featherstone and Pontefract. They boarded without a grumble, except for one veteran; dirt grimed to the whites of his eyes, with the odour of foul, trapped underground air. He stopped at the top of the platform steps, turned to me and said with a nod in the driver's direction, 'ah wouldn't have thar bloody job at no price!'

Two new long services were introduced to York, and beyond to Haxby, based on extending the Wakefield-Pontefract route. One was via Tadcaster, the other through Selby. The new Leyland PLSC Lions were used. These routes were a relaxing coach tour for conductors. We travelled miles without a stop, passengers were few, except at weekends and bank holidays and never a standing load. I can only remember one tea jug stop which was a house in Escrick.

In winter, empty Lions could be freezing cold. For one week on the Selby route, we were given a demonstration Leyland Tiger. Leaving Selby for Monk Fryston we entered a long straight stretch of road and my driver decided to put his foot down and put the Tiger to test. We reached sixty miles per hour.

Meanwhile, at the Saville Street garage, buses departed and arrived at the will of the rota sheet. Friday midday and the rota sheet became a formality, a dictated way of working life for those of us with our names in type, in the usual place.

However, a Friday arrived when my name was not typed in the usual place. In fact it had been reduced in rank, appearing with two others isolated at the bottom of the sheet. Above the trio in print were instructions terse and to the point: 'Monday, report garage 8.00 am'.

*To be continued*



## Work of the Research Co-ordinator

Tony Newman

My aims have already been given space in *Newsletter 44* and progress has been reported regularly to the Committee of Management during the three years that I have held this post. The work of the Association includes the making of connections, sharing discoveries and storing a permanent record of the results. These are activities to be enjoyed by all those freely taking part and, if levels of communication are good, no one should ever feel under pressure or isolated in the work they have embarked upon.

The sharing of discoveries is one aspect that I have sought to promote. In an attempt to bring to light material that has been or is currently being worked upon in a local community, I have made contact by e-mail with over 100 local history societies; the Research Workshop in Leeds last October was a continuing attempt at developing these connections.

Sources of information have never been as widely available as they are today but it is the bringing together of items that are relevant to a particular line of research that can be daunting. While the Internet can be immensely valuable for providing clues and for delivering ready-made articles and papers directly into your home, the most successful and novel research usually involves getting out and about, looking for the original sources.

Much of this raw material is to be found in archives in record depositories, up and down the country. These are the primary sources of historical record. Other sources that should not be neglected include museums, company archives and chartered institutes. A search of local history publications and university dissertations will often yield some unexpected material that has been worked upon and then put away.

The richest source of original documents must surely be The National Archives (TNA), formerly The Public

Record Office (PRO) at Kew. It is not easy of access for someone living, say in Yorkshire, but is well worth the effort of planning for an occasional visit.

The Association is committed to maintaining links with appropriate officers working at TNA and also to the preparation of a Readers' Guide to Road Transport History Sources there. Perhaps members who are currently researching at County Record Offices could act as ambassadors for the Association and establish similar links.

Indexes are the keys to unlock many of these sources. Holdings at TNA can be viewed on the Internet, while holdings at most County Record Offices are now searchable at a combined site on the Internet, called A2A which is still being added to daily. Indexes to journals, publications and bibliographies need to be noted for future reference and I would be grateful to any members who can notify me of the existence of any they may find. It is always better to be told about something twice than not at all.

We have a List of Contents for our own *Newsletter Nos. 1-55*, which is regularly updated and is available to members in electronic format.

The key word in my job title is 'Co-ordinator' and your participation is going to be not only invaluable but also necessary if we are to make real progress. For example, when you have sourced data, pass it on to me: what you have found (in summary form) and the file references. I envisage a comprehensive register of such findings, available to all members.

This shared knowledge is our life blood. We should all feel able to work at our own pace in the time of our choosing, but still with the firm understanding that we are all part of a team working together towards a common purpose.

## M6:50 Exhibition

Date: 29/11/2008 - 11/04/2009

Venue: Museum of Lancashire

On 5th December 1958, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, formally opened the Preston By-pass, the first stretch of motorway in Britain. The subsequent development of the UK motorway network would play a profound role in transforming Britain into a modern automotive economy.

M6:50 will mark the significant 50th anniversary of the opening of the Preston By-pass and chart the

revolutionary impact of the motorway building programme on the region and beyond, tracing how six-lane culture has changed in that time. Learn about the contribution of motorways to the 'Booming Britain' of the 1960s. Explore the massive changes in patterns of living, commuting and working and get involved with the love-hate debate surrounding the M6.

This exhibition will also be at Lancaster City Museum from 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2009 to 29<sup>th</sup> August 2009.

[www.lancashire.gov.uk/education/museums/lancashire](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/education/museums/lancashire)

## Holidays at Butlins

John Hibbs

When I started at Premier Travel in August 1950, as P.A. to Mr Lainson, the Managing Director, I quickly became familiar with the company's services, and the Chrishall, Haverhill and Huntingdon depots and offices.

I was also expected quite quickly to get used to preparing data for licence applications and attending Traffic Courts. One major activity concerned the efforts to obtain an express service to Oxford. But another responsibility that developed concerned *Service Five*, the Birmingham-Clacton service, which was the busiest of all.

The service had been originated by Webbers Bros. of Wood Green, who traded as *Empire's Best* on the London - Clacton route, and Premier bought it in April 1937. The Saturdays only summer service was developed, giving a journey each way on Saturdays and Sundays with positioning journeys to Birmingham on Fridays and to Clacton on Mondays, eventually throughout the year. Intermediate timing points were developed, including Coventry, Leicester and various towns including Cambridge, but not all intermediate fare stages were permitted by the Traffic Commissioners.

Demand increased steadily until express services were suspended with the outbreak of war. But *Service Five* started quickly after the war, and the demand for passengers to get to Butlins Holiday Camp at Clacton required massive duplication on Saturdays, in each direction, and this meant hiring coaches in from other firms. A round trip within a day was not possible, so to save dead mileage it was usual to swap passengers at a convenient refreshment stop.

This was usually at the *Grapes* public house at Linton, south of Cambridge. The secret was to match the numbers placed on coaches each way, to move the luggage from one to the other, and to get the passengers back into the coach that would take them on. And the key was to match coaches of the same capacity - match a 29-seater with a 35-seater and you were in trouble!

On of my jobs was to be at Lensfield Road in Cambridge, to see the service through on summer Saturdays - it didn't use the bus station. I remember a rather superior sounding gentleman getting upset because some of the coaches were delayed - "Who's the Head Serang?" he asked. Then there was the time when we discovered at the last minute that two hired coaches would not be available, and alternatives had to be booked. I was there to sort it out - and found that 33 people were required to fit into a 29-seater. I can recall only too well how it felt to be faced with 33 very cross passengers! I can't remember how I dealt with it, but I must have done so

after a fashion - the complaints that followed never targeted me.

The service terminated in Clacton some distance from Butlins, which must have been good for the local taxi firms. At the Birmingham end the service car left from Allenways depot, but the bulk of the traffic was carried from the Midland Red coach station in Digbeth - BMMO knew they could never get a licence for Clacton, so they were more than content to be booking agents.

Most years we applied for additional duplication. The Road Service Licence was held in the West Midland Traffic Area, and I became familiar with the Traffic Courts held in a building in Great Charles Street in Birmingham, where we appeared before Stuart Pilcher. We had no objections from Midland Red or Associated Motorways, but always from British Railways - Eastern, London Midland and, for some reason Western as well.

This meant collecting a coach load of witnesses who appeared before the court to say they wanted to go to Clacton, but not by train. The train service was slow, stopping all the way, and the rolling stock still primitive - non-corridor carriages with uncomfortable seats.

Having said their say, these good people went out for a day's shopping in Birmingham, for free! The typical outcome would be two or three extra vehicles when we had applied for five. Mr Lainson would take our case, against the expensive lawyers paid for by the objectors. I would be there with our papers, and taking notes, and it was there that I heard a memorable decision from Mr Pilcher, which is worth recording.

Pilcher was a busman, with a distinguished history, latterly at Manchester, and he had little interest in coach services. We reckoned that his Traffic Clerk took the decisions for him.

On one occasion, when we were waiting for our application to be heard, it was plain that the applicant had made a better case than had been expected, and we saw the Traffic Clerk stand up, turn his back on the court, and hand the Commissioner a note. It seems that in conclusion Pilcher read from an earlier decision, when he announced, 'The application is not granted'. The Clerk turned round and spoke to him whereupon he apologised, and said, 'I'm sorry, the application is granted. Next case please'. Thereupon counsel for an objector stood up and complained that he had not been allowed to dispute the decision. Smiling broadly, Pilcher said he was sorry, 'But, you know, it would not have made any difference'. The silence that followed was memorable!

## Members' Forum

Thank you to Bob, Andrew and Gordon for taking the interest and time to answer questions posed in this column (NL55).

Disappointingly, no new questions, just a plea from me for a possible article to mark 50 years of the M1.

It is your Forum. You provide the questions that have been niggling away, and answer the questions you can. If you have a line or two of titbit that might be of general interest, or might just be the final missing piece of the jigsaw for somebody's research then share it.

**Bob Rust writes:**  
Roadside tributes:-

The first I can remember is in the late 70s. A Spurling's driver was killed on the A2 just east of the M25 junction. His wife put a large wreath on the bank at that spot and for some years placed a fresh one on the anniversary of his death.

The next is 84/85 on the outskirts of Edenbridge a car full of teenagers hit a tree and several were killed. At first there were bouquets of flowers, then a small flower bed was made round the base of the tree. Finally replaced by a nicely made wooden cross screwed to the tree.

There was a bad accident near St Austell when the arm of a digger being carried on a low loader came loose it swung round and killed several car drivers going the other way. There is now a grey granite memorial at the spot with a flower bed and vases.

Near where I live is a very elaborate shrine to two young girls killed by a drunken driver, this is on private land at the edge of the road and serviced every week by the parents with special things for birthdays.



*Convoy of Queen Marys described by Bob Rust - Bob Rust*  
Queen Marys:-

I have attached a photo, sent to me from an unknown newspaper. You can see the unit on one is a Bedford OY and the others are Crossleys, I am told. There used to be a sign on a gable wall (I think in the Abingdon area) which said 'Queen Mary vehicles must not use this route'. They were built by Taskers of Andover and there

is one in the Hendon RAF Museum.

**Andrew Waller writes:**

Roy Sager asked about Queen Mary trailers (Members' Forum, NL55).

As a small child growing up in wartime Hampshire, I remember these vehicles well. They looked like low-slung Bailey bridges moored at one end to a tractor which trailed them along on a pair of wheels at the other end. They ferried parts of Spitfires, and other aircraft, between the factories that built different sections of the planes. I imagine they were called Queen Marys because at the time they seemed very big, as did the Transatlantic liner RMS Queen Mary, built in 1936.

The story is taken up in the history of Wilts & Dorset Motor Services (reviewed in Newsletter 49):

'By September 1940, when the Luftwaffe's bombs destroyed Supermarine's Southampton factory on the bank of the Itchen, Winston Churchill's Minister of Aircraft Production, Lord Beaverbrook, had already ordered that Spitfire production be dispersed. Among other places it went to Trowbridge, Newbury, Salisbury and Reading. Wilts & Dorset's Salisbury depot was one of half a dozen sites around that city commandeered to work on Spitfire wings, whilst the fuselages and other parts were assembled in other premises nearby. Queen Marys then ferried the completed parts to High Post Aerodrome, on the Amesbury Road, or to the Chattis Hill training gallops, near Stockbridge, for final assembly and flight testing.'

There is a fine photo on the Internet of a preserved Queen Mary, towed by a Bedford OWL tractor, at [www.lichfield.co.uk](http://www.lichfield.co.uk)

**Gordon Knowles writes:**

These were a common sight during WWII, being a long low slung articulated trailer with about 12" clearance. They were used by the RAF to carry crashed aircraft, sometime new ones. They were single-axle with outboard wheels and side rails to carry wings, whilst the aircraft body was in the well of the trailer. Usually towed by a Bedford tractor.

Your editor is in need of any information and photographs on the Atkinson Motorway snowplough/gritters that were built for the Ministry of Transport. Scammell built several, with the bulk of the order going to Atkinson. The first were built in 1959 with the opening of the M1 and were built to MOT specification.

## Book Reviews

### **AN OLYMPIC SUMMER – Transport for London in 1948**

Paul Collins

Ian Allan

ISBN 978 0 7110 3309 2 152 pages, £19.99

This book celebrates the work of transport photographer Victor (V.C.) Jones during the year of the last London Olympics. There are more than 140 of his photographs, taken in the spring and summer of that year, predominantly in London, but some as far afield as Leicester and Southampton. Paul Collins sets this fascinating visual record in its social, political and sporting context, with two introductory chapters, one just entitled '1948' and the second about the 14<sup>th</sup> Olympic Games themselves.

He writes that Jones, who died in 1981, left two great legacies of his abiding interest in trams and buses, his 'prodigious photography', to which the book bears witness, and his work with Geoffrey Ashwell, Jack Law and John Meredith in recording the sounds of London's tramway system in its last few years.

Most of the photographs are of buses and trams – these nearing their end in London and Southampton. All the images are richly atmospheric. Jones' 35mm Leica also caught locomotives shunting freight wagons around Southampton, the Queen Mary steaming out of port, and a paddle steamer churning its way across the Solent. There are no less than ten shots of a heavy Scammell tractor deftly piloting across London all 137 feet of a giant fractionating column at the start of its journey to New York from its manufacturers in Greenwich.

For anyone intrigued by a delightful visual record of the transport world of 60 years ago, enhanced by highly informative captions, this book is well worth buying.

**Andrew Waller**

### **DEVON GENERAL - A Fascinating Story**

Leslie Folkard

The Devon General Society, The Treasurer, Devon General Society, 5 Midway, Kingskerswell, Newton Abbot, TQ12 5BS

ISBN 978 0 955514 0 6 312 pages, 163 photos £20.00 + £5.00 p&p

Anyone writing the history of a company, whatever its field of activity, has to decide what balance to strike between charting the chronological sequence of events and describing thematically how the business develops over the longer term. Telling the history of this south Devon bus company, Leslie Folkard recounts the events of each year, whether they be changes at board level, the establishment of new routes, the acquisition of other

operators, or the expansion of the bus fleet.

Folkard, an acknowledged expert on the history of Devon General, wrote the book to mark last year's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Devon General Society: 2007 was also a quarter of a century after the breakup of the Western National Omnibus Company Ltd, into which Devon General had been absorbed in all but name in 1971.

The Devon General Omnibus & Touring Co Ltd started in 1919 with a service between Exeter and Torquay. It was reconstituted as a public company under the control of the better equipped Torquay Tramways Ltd in 1922. By the time the tramway system was abandoned in 1934 two railway companies had each taken a stake in Devon General – the Great Western and the Southern. It had also acquired two substantial coaching operations based in Torquay. Folkard devotes a chapter to each of these, Fleet Cars and Grey Cars.

There is a section on the Torquay Tramways Company 1907-1934, but most of the other chapters cover periods of five to ten calendar years of the Devon General company's history. However there are nearly 40 pages devoted to fleet details and 20 to depots and bus stations, as well as six brief appendices.

Forty-nine of the 163 photographs in the book are in colour. All in all this is a comprehensive history of a well-loved bus company from the day its founders met in a South London suburb until it was effectively dissolved by the vagaries of national politics that took hold of the industry in the 1970s and 1980s.

The book is available by post from The Treasurer, Devon General Society, 5 Midway, Kingskerswell, Newton Abbot, TQ12 5BS or from a number of bookshops, see [www.devongeneral.org.uk](http://www.devongeneral.org.uk)

**Andrew Waller**

### **RICHMOND'S COACHES, SIXTY YEARS OF SERVICE, 1946-2006**

Paul Carter

Richmond's Coaches, The Garage, Barley, Herts, SG8 8JA 129pp, numerous illustrations. £15.00 + £2.00p&p

This is an interesting tale, well told and illustrated, of a country bus and coach firm based in picturesque north Hertfordshire. It began when H.V. Richmond, starting a career as a fire extinguisher salesman, visited Livermore's garage in Barley, discovered it was for sale and bought it.

The excellent fleet list details the four vehicles acquired, three of which were in the fleet of seven with which Richmond's began the 1950s. To the beginning of the

1980s, Bedford and Ford were the preferred marques; thereafter Volvo predominated until VDL Bova became the standard coach from 2003. Three Volvos were acquired when the older (1921) business of Smith of Buntingford was acquired by Richmond's in 1994. Ford Transits, Toyota Coasters, Mercedes-Benz and Optare feature as smaller coaches and buses operated.

Two points of particular interest stand out; the local coachbuilder, Thurgood of Ware, was not selected apart from one Bedford OB. Another OB with Duple Vista body was acquired from a nearby operator as late as 1970. This was operated for 8 years on school contract and bus work.

A helpful and complete list of services operated is provided, running into Buntingford, Royston, Hitchin, Cambridge and Bishops Stortford. There is also a weekday commuter coach service to London, which is illustrated but not included in the list.

Road transport history cannot exist in a vacuum and this book benefits greatly from the author's awareness of the national and local economic and social context in which the development of a successful family business has taken place. Personal reminiscences of staff and family members add an extra dimension to this historical narrative.

Richard Storey

## Letters to the Editor

May I add to the information given on the first page of NL55, as I feel it is rather misleading.

The first post-War Commercial Motor Vehicle Exhibition was held in Earls Court from the 1st to 9th October 1948. It was subsequently re-named the Commercial Motor Show and held every other year at the end of September/beginning of October until 1976. The Motor Show held in November was purely for cars and was held annually. With the opening of the N.E.C. in 1978, the Commercial Motor Show and the Motor Show were combined with tremendous chaos resulting because of the large number of visitors and a one way round system which meant people could not go directly to the area that they wanted to see. Fortunately things were improved for subsequent shows with Commercial Motor Shows occurring still biennially.

The 1959 agreement with the Smithfield Club and Agricultural Engineers Association was completely separate from the Motor Shows.

I hope this is of interest.

Robin Hannay

Regarding H. Newland & Co:

1. The 1923-1924 *Motor Transport Year-Book* lists:

'Newland & Company, Pokesdown, Bournemouth – Telephone, Southbourn 98. Road transport and haulage contractors. Regular services, with petrol and steam wagons, operated between London and Bournemouth. Heavy haulage a speciality. Rolling stock – Consists of 10 steam and petrol vehicles, machinery and boiler trollies.'

(Southbourn and trollies as spelt in year-book).

2. There's a similar photo, taken from a slightly different angle, of the vehicle in *Village Buses of East Dorset*, as reviewed on page 19, NL55. The caption says the vehicle was advertised for sale in *Commercial Motor* in November 1914.

The photograph on page 3 also appeared in *Victorian & Edwardian Dorset from Old Prints*, published by Batsford in 1977.

Andrew Waller

## Editorial Requirements

Contributions by email attachments, on CD or paper by Royal Mail. Photographs accompanying articles should be scanned at 300dpi as jpegs, or sent for me to scan and return.

Members with photographs, particularly passenger vehicles, they'd be prepared to share if needed, please let me know what you have available.

*A Harrison Sentinel, with North Western Road Services tarpaulin and North Western Road Services Leyland - early 1930s?*



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