Newsletter

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Johnsons Coaches Centenary

Richard Storey

Johnsons Coaches of Henley-in-Arden, Warwickshire, originated in 1909 when Jack Johnson set up his carrier business, trading as J. G. Johnson. His first new motor vehicle was an interesting one; a Garner Bus Van, which served Birmingham, Stratford-on-Avon, Warwick and Leamington Spa.

During the week the sides dropped down and the seats were removed, providing a suitable vehicle for the carrier business. At weekends, the seats and sides were replaced and Johnsons as a coach operator was born.

The founder died in the late 1920s, but his widow and one of his sons, Philip, carried on the business until they both died in 1969, when Philip's brother, Roy, and his wife Joan, took over the business. Their sons, Peter and John, have run the company since 1987. The second generation's first new coach was a Bedford SB with 29 seats.

Compared to the modern fleet of some 80 vehicles, the firm still operated on a small scale in the 1960s, running two coaches, a taxi and two lorries until 1967, then growing to four coaches, a taxi and a removal lorry. Driver shortages proved a problem and Joan Johnson qualified as a PSV driver to help out and is still active in the business.

In addition to coach excursions, served by feeder minibuses, the Johnson Excelbus operates within a wide area (15 county council services in 2007), including two town services in Kenilworth.

Johnsons' operations are supported by their own ancillary transport. In 2009, Johnsons acquired the coach and car repair business of Welcombe Garages in Stratford-on-Avon, their premises providing a parking facility for Johnsons' coach passengers.

Today, the Johnsons' fleet ranges from 8 to 53 seat luxury coaches and provides tailor-made holiday services throughout the UK and Europe, day trips and stage services around South Warwickshire and South Birmingham.

Johnsons won Coach Operator of the Year 2005, Bus Operator of the Year 2006 and Best Holiday Programme together with Best Day Excursion awards in 2006.

The original premises in High Street, Henley-in-Arden were outgrown by the late 1980s and new offices and a coach yard were established at Liveridge Hill, where the company remains to this day. The coach yard provides parking for customers, staff and coaches alongside the modern office block.

J.G. Johnson's Garner - the tailboard is evidence of its dual purpose - Johnsons Coaches

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Editorial

Welcome to the June newsletter. It doesn't seem possible that 12 months have passed since writing my first editorial.

Happily, for me anyway, this editorial is being written with far less nervousness than 12 months ago. Thank you for all your support and contributions during the last 12 months.

Thank you to all this edition's contributors, especially those who are contributing for the first time. I hope it won't be your last.

This edition carries the concluding part of David Allen's article on Bill Baines' working life. It has been a fascinating insight into not only bus company history but social history as well. I hope it has inspired more of you to share your memories in the newsletter.

I am sure that all the members who attended the March Members' meeting and AGM found it one of the most enjoyable and interesting meetings for a long time. I know I did.

Not only were the speakers varied and fascinating, but there was the opportunity to sample the new catering facilities at the Coventry Motor Museum. These are very much improved and go a long way to make Members' Meetings an even better day out.

Your subscription includes attendance at Members' Meetings, so make the most of your membership by including 26 September in your diaries.

I have enjoyed the last 12 months, especially receiving your comments and contributions and I look forward to the next 12 months and more of your comments and contributions.

Association Matters

The September Members' Meeting of the Association will be held on 26 September, 2009 at the Coventry Motor Museum. All members will be very welcome.

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March Members' Meeting and AGM

The Members' Meeting on 20 March began with the Annual General Meeting of the Association. The formalities were efficiently and quickly dispensed with and the gathered members were treated to three varied and interesting presentations of excellent quality.

Dave Bubier's topic, *Roads Policy in the Age of Reform* was a welcome and fascinating insight into the personalities and politics affecting roads before the age of the motor vehicle and tarmacadam.

Between 1780 and 1850 the expansion of industrialisation led to the growth of both freight and passenger transport on the roads. There was an obvious need for improvement and a national roads agenda, though this wasn't easy with the political will of the day. It was Thomas Telford in Scotland and later, John Louden Macadam who paved the way for reform, but it was not until 1835 and a change of government from Tory to Whig that the General Highways Act repealed all existing statutes for non-turnpike roads.

Dave gave a fascinating insight into how circumstances forced reluctant change and provided the basis for future legislation.

Philip Scowcroft provided a well-informed account of the various transport modes, companies and personalities in and around Doncaster. Doncaster grew around the Lincoln/York Highway roads from Roman times and was the limit of navigation of the River Don. It remained an important crossing point of the river until the 18th C and therefore has a rich and varied transport history.

Packhorses, wagons, stagecoaches, trams, carriers, coaching inns and carriers' agents have all played their part in Doncaster's transport heritage.

Robert McCloy told us about bus services in Merthyr Tydfil during the immediate post-WW1 depression. The collapse of traditional industries around Merthyr created the need for workers to travel further afield for employment. The bus service met the need and with its success encouraged worker migration.

We were given an insight into the municipal and private operations, the political influence and the practicalities of establishing a bus service. The council's priority was for economic regeneration and recognised road transport as an important and integral part of that regeneration.

Following the boom times of the 1920s, the depression of the 1930s placed Merthyr's bus services under great strain and created tension between the council and private operators as pruning of services became inevitable.

A fascinating, if complicated story.

Companion News

Ken Swallow

Dr Corinne Mulley, editor of the Associations' Companion to Public Road Transport History in Great Britain and Ireland from its infancy, took up a professorial post in Australia in December. She's the founding Chair in Public Transport at the University of Sydney, a new position funded by the New South Wales government. A transport economist, previously holding an appointment at Newcastle University, Corinne has had a particular interest in modern transport history. The internet's shrinking of the world will enable her to continue as a corresponding member of the editorial group as the Companion reaches its final drafting stages, but meanwhile her outstanding contribution to this important aspect of the work of the Association is gratefully acknowledged.

Association member Martin Higginson was last summer appointed as Companion assistant editor to work with Corinne and to move into the editorial chair on her departure. Dr Higginson, also a transport economist by profession, has some 40 years experience in the public and private sectors in road, rail and water transport management, operations, planning, education and research and runs his own independent consultancy business. He is a Visiting Fellow in the Transport Operations Research Group at Newcastle University and also a Visiting Research Fellow in the York University/ National Railway Museum Institute of Railway Studies and Transport History. He is author of many publications, including works on historical aspects of transport.

The assembly of entries for the Companion enjoys steady progress, with around 95% completed or commissioned, and the management committee is now able to turn its serious attention to how it should be published. When completed, the Companion will comprise over 800 entries, covering topics ranging from bus and coach operators and manufacturers, key personalities to more obscure – but nevertheless most fascinating – matters such as liveries, bus and tram stops, vehicle exports and imports, and the multitude of different fuels and propulsion systems that have been used in the public transport industry over the years.

Early Days on the Buses

David Allen

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

Part 4 - 1930 Legislation

The 1930 Road Traffic Act brought in inspections for the new Certificate of Fitness for buses amongst the general new legislation. The local public service vehicle inspector we called 'The Hooded Terror'. His job was to carry out probing and tapping with hammers while he peered with a torch. I was appointed his guide, following him with hand lamp and spanners.

His infrequent visits usually lasted for two days. His first visits compelled us to fit wood laths around external petrol tanks as protection against road flints puncturing the tanks. Prop shafts to be enclosed in steel 'U' cradles and some seats on the Lions had to be repositioned. Overall lengths were checked and our only Leyland Cub failed and brackets had to be repositioned.

Away From The Garage

In summer, the Blackpool Express Saturday service became a convoy, with Saville Street a picking up point. It was a 7.00am start for drivers and two conductors who also acted as baggage porters. The same start time applied to the travelling mechanic who also had to drive a bus and one of the mechanics on Saturday rota, including Ron and others. I was surprised to find my name added, presumably as assistant mechanic, definitely as third baggage handler.

The only stop for refreshment was Gisburn, between Skipton and Clitheroe. After passengers had safely alighted and been directed to food etc., the rest of us made a beeline for the kitchen at the rear of the pub to sit down to a complementary full breakfast, plus a packet of cigarettes. A B&S voucher got us a hot meal in Blackpool.

I made my third trip as usual, with two conductors and a mechanic. Among the disembarking passengers were three girls who immediately claimed the attention of our two conductors, who recognised them as regulars on their service routes.

These three damsels suggested a walk on the prom, with myself included. The outcome of this amorous breach of the B&S tourist rules, resulted in a delayed return to the bus station. The drivers were loading the last of the luggage. They were not amused and, without doubt our late return would be reported, which it was.

I had made my last trip to Blackpool and I never knew what happened to the conductors. The Blackpool run was a twelve-hour day.

The Sports Club flourished, using rented accommodation in the city, with a bar and billiard table. For myself and others from the garage, dinner breaks were sandwiches wolfed and tea swilled down followed by a sprint for a game of billiards. Ron and myself were elected onto the social committee. Teddy Bullock beamed: 'Why not a staff dance?' – and staff dances there were!

Our first one in Wakefield Town Hall was a success. Featherstone and Selby depots developed clubs on similar lines. A staff bus was laid on for dances at both these places and my first experience of a blind date followed. But Sports and Social Clubs were not my way of leisure life.

Weather permitting, I cycled to work on Saturdays. One Saturday I was the last to leave, just about to put my cycle through the Judas door when George from the office appeared, in a cold sweat.

A Lion on the Leeds to Knottingley service had broken down with a fractured universal joint at Methley. Had all the mechanics gone home? Yes, they had (I was tempted to say: 'Except me'). Did I think I could replace the joint with a new one? The answer was, 'yes'.

I donned my boiler suit, packed a universal joint and the required tools in my saddlebag. Off I shot along Stanley Road past Newmarket Colliery. I changed the joint, laying on my back on cold tarmac, then left for home. On Monday morning I told Ron, who suggested overtime payment, for which I got thirty-two shillings instead of thirty.

We had a scare one morning, which could have been the end of the new B&S garage. A Dominion tanker was topping up the storage tank under the garage floor. Beyond the tanker two conductors were washing parts with petrol, then swilling with water hose. Water and petrol streamed down the draining channel to a grate by the tanker. The driver was stood by the tanker smoking and suddenly the channel of flowing petrol/water from tanker to hose point became a sheet of flame.

Shouts from the conductors brought mechanics out grabbing for extinguishers and bus cabs were robbed of their Pyrenes. The flames were mastered, with the tanker hose still connected to the storage tank. Did the driver toss a match or cigarette end into the drainage grate?

I was being called away from the engine stand more and

more to do routine servicing. Jack came out of his office one day and asked me if I had a driving licence. 'No,' was the answer and he looked at me in horror. 'Well b... well get one, you'll get me the sack!' With that he strode away leaving me with a Morris coupe loaded with petrol to take down to a stranded bus on the Woolworth stand. My mother gave me five shillings for a driving licence, dated June 1933.

Arrival of the Diesel

Beyond the engine stand, unfamiliar sound waves filtered through the garage doors, increasing to a monastic, hesitant series of low thuds. The B&S had gone diesel.

A Leyland Titan double-decker was driven to Pepper Road, Leeds and, shorn of its petrol engine, it arrived back, encumbered with a Gardner diesel engine and with an unseemly protrusion well beyond the original radiator line.

Leyland TD1. Bullock's first double-deckers entered service in 1931.

Diesel oil of the 30s looked dirty, smelt dirty and was dirty. Diesel engine jets were prime targets for trouble. A compressed air jet was installed on the roof of the stores to blow clean the injectors. With the engine cover removed, the Gardner engine posed problems. No spark plugs, carburettor or magneto. For me, the Gardner was an open book.

Unfortunately, I left the B&S before a diesel engine reached a major overall stage, but was given the job of removing and cleaning the intake filter on a Titan diesel. It had to be thoroughly soaked and cleaned in paraffin, dried out, and replaced after damping in oil.

Final Days

The winter of 1933 had heavy snow. One Friday night, snow was falling heavily and continued throughout the night. I was up as usual at 4.30am, with mother cooking me a good breakfast. Well wrapped, I goose-stepped all the way to the outskirts of Wakefield, where clearing operations were under way, and arrived at the old garage before 8.00am.

There was quite a gathering. The news was that a Lion was embedded in a snowdrift at Swillington and also that a Tiger on the long York/Haxby service was stranded at Towton with a dead engine.

Jack was in the process of organising a rescue party and brushes, shovels, towropes etc. were loaded into a PLSC1 Lion. Ron, George and others were left to hold the new garage fort.

General snow clearing had gone well. Our Lion awaiting rescue had left the road, and plunged into a drift. The stranded Lion slowly gave way to shovel and rope, and was brought back to terra firma. Much to our surprise, the engine started straight away. A mechanic was appointed to return the Lion to Saville Street.

With one rescue achieved, we headed about 15 miles to Towton, via Garforth. Arriving at the parked Tiger, which was either 95 or 97, we found the driver and conductor huddled on a seat, frozen stiff. According to the driver, the engine had cut out, and despite both of them on the starting handle, the engine refused to start.

Off came the engine cover, Jack climbed onto the mudguard and four hands mastered the starting handle. Meanwhile, Jack closed the carburettor choke, covering the intake with hand-bunched piece of cloth. We called this 'gobbing' to increase the petrol/air richness.

Surprisingly, the Tiger answered to the starting handle, burst into life, and then stopped. The air was filled with uncomplimentary remarks from Jack directed at the Tiger. His knee length, light brown garage coat had caught the cooling fan, snatching away the temporary choke and stopping the engine. A repeat performance brought the Tiger to life again.

Much to our surprise, Jack told the Tiger driver to proceed to Tadcaster, park and find a fish and chip shop. We followed, parked and raided a shop, where Jack treated us all to 'fish and a pennyworth'. It was a long, cold journey back to Saville Street, then home and straight into the tin bath.

About this time father retired from the pit, giving one of my three older sisters, fourteen years my senior, the opportunity of being self employed and moving to Ravensthorpe. I was despatched to Saville Street to announce my leaving without the customary one week notice. No notice, no reference.

The Last Drop

Steve Wimbush

At the end of June 1985, a long established transport operation came to an end - victim of the milk quota scheme which affected milk producers all over the country. Latterly known as Frank Edwards Transport, the history of this operation goes back to the 1920s when Mr Jim Lawrence pioneered the bulk haulage of milk from Wiltshire to London.

In 1926 farmers in rural Wiltshire found that they could obtain better prices for their milk from dairies in London than they could locally. A daily service was provided from rural stations by the Great Western Railway but the quantity involved dictated that the humble farm milk churn be used for the complete transit. Of course, the return of the empties was vital if the daily dispatch of milk was to continue.

A novel idea for the smaller producers was introduced by Mr Lawrence which involved the grouping of milk at his West Park Dairy situated in Market Lavington. From here it was dispatched to the London area bottling plants by an AEC Monarch bulk road tanker, which he drove himself.

1966 AEC Mammoth Major of Bridgnorth Milk Transport.

Demand for the service soon dictated the purchase of a second AEC tanker and, shortly after, both were converted from petrol to diesel power by the AEC Service Department at Southall.

A major development away from Wiltshire was the purchase of a dairy at Bridgnorth in Shropshire from which a similar operation was set up for the benefit of local farmers to move their milk to distant markets in major towns and cities. This operation was called Bridgnorth Milk Transport.

Following the successful operation of the first pair of tankers, AEC chassis became the preferred type. The eight-wheeled Mammoth Major became standard, though one or two smaller four and six-wheelers were operated over the years.

The milk runs from both Wiltshire and Shropshire continued throughout the dark days of war, though blackout conditions caused journey times to become somewhat less predictable. Any 24-hour 365 day operation was very difficult and breakdowns and accidents were frequent. The AEC Service Depot at Windmill Lane Southall undertook such repairs and attended breakdowns in the London area.

In post war years Bridgnorth bought a new chassis every couple of years and others were acquired second hand. Inevitably the glass lined bulk tanks built by APV at Wandsworth (they later moved to a new factory at Crawley and became part of SPX in 2008) were transferred from one chassis to another with any necessary refurbishment being carried out at this time.

Bridgnorth vehicles were unusual in not carrying fleet names - the only identity being a silver painted chassis with green wheels and cab with the tank number being carried on the front tank supports. The exception to this rule was the AEC Matador recovery vehicle which carried the letters 'BMT' on the front of the cab either side of the radiator.

An outstation was set up at Park Lane in Thatcham, Berkshire, just after the war but the rapid expansion of the West Country operation, which by now included many creameries in Somerset and Devon, led to a new depot being set up in Station Road, Thatcham, where former driver Frank Edwards was put in charge . He occupied a bungalow in the corner of the yard.

The operation was now at its peak of 27 vehicles of which no less than 23 were eight-wheel Mammoth Majors. The principal creameries in the London area served by BMT vehicles were at Manor Park, Palmers Green, Willesden and White City. In addition, the larger dairy companies, including London Co-Operative Dairies and the CWS Dairy, frequently sub-contracted work to Bridgnorth.

By the mid-sixties demand for milk and milk products was beginning to decline and the first casualty was the

dairy at Bridgnorth. A depot was set up in Station Road, Witney just off the A40 which looked after operations between Wales and London and here another former driver, Bob Dunstan, was in charge. The Witney depot was to be comparatively short lived with all traffic movements being concentrated at Thatcham, under the Bridgnorth Milk Transport (Western) Ltd., name. However, following the retirement of founder Jim Lawrence, the firm changed its name to Frank Edwards Transport Ltd.

By this time there had been great strides in articulation and when two chassis came up for replacement their tanks were refurbished into one and mounted on to Crane Fruehauf trailer running gear. A former Milk Marketing Board AEC Mercury artic unit was acquired to pull this trailer. Such was the success that further conversions followed as more Mammoth Majors became due for replacement and more ex-MMB artic units arrived to pull them.

After many years of AEC operation, it was with some surprise that local spotters noted the arrival of a Seddon-Atkinson 401 artic unit in the Station Road yard.

When the furore surrounding the EEC milk quotas was going on in the local farming community we had reckoned without the effect that this would have on the local transport scene. But as time went by and the new rules came into force, the Station Road yard became more congested with idle vehicles. It was nevertheless a surprise when *The Newbury Weekly News* carried a planning application for a housing development on the site of Frank Edwards' yard and the sight of his vehicles on the road became more of a notable event!

The final operational fleet, by now all articulated outfits, was advertised by a Coventry commercial vehicle dealer in July 1985. A visit to the depot in August 1985 revealed that the small office and the open-sided workshop building had gone and Frank Edwards' bungalow was being demolished. Frank retired to Hampshire but later returned to live in West Berkshire where he unfortunately died a couple of years later.

This was indeed a sad end to an operation that had started in such a humble way some 60 years earlier. Two of the former Bridgnorth vehicles have survived into preservation. The AEC Matador was reported to be alive and well when seen at a rally on the Isle of Wight a couple of years ago. The 1941-built Mercury four-wheeler (BHR 505) which was donated by Bridgnorth to Arlington Motors of Bristol for restoration on closure of Witney depot is now with AEC restorer Dave Hawkins in South Wales and will soon be returned to the road.

The *Royal Umpire* Stagecoach

Duncan Wood

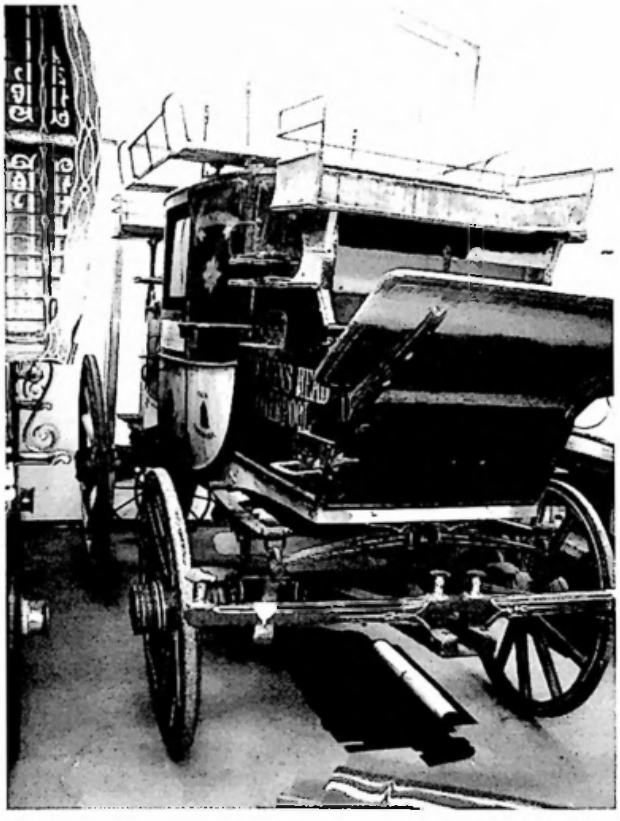
In an article in the June 2006 Newsletter, (NL46), Ken Swallow described how he had followed the trail of the Royal Umpire *stagecoach to a Derbyshire barn where it was then 'waiting for the next episode in its story to unfold'. From Derbyshire the coach found its way to the widely respected Fairbourne Carriages at Harrietsham, near Maidstone, where it is now awaiting a full restoration. We are indebted to Duncan Wood, of Fairbourne Carriages, for helping us to understand the historical significance of the* Royal Umpire.

Many people often make the mistake of confusing the different types of coach. Before I discuss the *Royal Umpire* stagecoach, it may be useful for readers if I set out a brief description of the four common types of carriage associated with the word 'Stagecoach', these being the Mail Coach, Stagecoach, Park Drag and 'Revival' Road Coach.

Mail coaches

Most often depicted stuck in a snow scene on many Christmas cards, the mail coach has achieved an almost mythical status within the carriage world. It is probably correct to say that only one or two mail coaches have survived to the present day.

The *Quicksilver*, built by Vidler, is currently in private



The Royal Umpire

ownership. The mail coach on display in the Science Museum, London, is almost certainly an early park drag that has had some mail coach ironwork fitted to the body, possibly from a redundant but rotten mail coach. There is another mail coach that is on display in the Stockwood Park Museum, Luton. Again, this is a later park drag body (c1880) crafted onto a C spring undercarriage and is most definitely not a mail coach, as it was built for film work. Finally, there is one other example on display in a small museum in the North of England.

Mail coaches were the Kings of the Road when operating and established a legendary reputation from the late 1780s to the mid 1830s. It is important to note that as soon as the railways were opened the mail coach route would have stopped and the mail coaches would have been sold or scrapped. By 1850 the mail coaches had all but disappeared.

Mail coaches carried eight fare-paying passengers, a guard and coachman, although later mail coaches were altered to carry more passengers in order to help them remain competitive towards the end of their reign. From 1786 until 1836 mail coaches were built and leased to the Post Office by coachbuilders Besant and Vidler of Mill Bank, London (Besant died in 1791 but his partner Vidler continued to supply the coaches).

Mail coaches were lighter than other types of coach given that they had to cover long distances in the quickest possible time, and as such every part of the mail coach was designed to serve a purpose. Each route would have had an up coach, a down coach and a spare. Mail coaches were finished with a red undercarriage, black panels on the front and rear boots and upper body panels and royal claret lower body ¼ panels.

One important point of note is that before Besant died he invented the 'mail axle'. This important development provided significant improvements over previous designs of axle.

Stagecoaches

Stagecoaches ran in competition with the mail coaches. The stagecoaches were not as fast as the mail coaches as they had to pay tolls whereas the mail coach was exempt. However, stagecoaches carried up to 16 paying passengers in addition to large parcels. The stagecoaches were somewhat heavier than the mail coaches, primarily because of the loads being carried and the fact that service intervals were intermittent. Stagecoach contractors, generally located in large coaching inns, did not have the benefit of a centrally based service agent. Therefore the running gear was slightly more substantial, with more axle mounting points, slightly heavier body framing to account for the passenger loading on the roof and so on, in order to provide a more durable coach. Stagecoaches were generally finished with red or yellow undercarriage, black front and rear boots and upper body panels with destinations and coloured lower ¼ panels.

As with the mail coaches, as soon as the railway routes opened the stagecoach would have been put out of business so that by 1850 stagecoaches were diminishing in ever-greater numbers. Today there are possibly only two or three surviving stagecoaches.

This brought to an end the period that is often referred to as the 'Golden Age of Coaching', which ran from c1815 to c1840. It was a short period of time that saw many developments in carriage and road design. I would suggest that mail coaches and stagecoaches could be called 'contract coaches' as they were built in considerable numbers, to a specification for commercial purposes.

The Royal Umpire

Park drag (private coach)

Similar in design to the mail coach and stagecoach, with front and rear boots and a raised centre section for passengers, the park drag was a private coach. Wealthy owners used them to entertain friends at events such as horse racing, hunting or a day's driving in the park. Importantly they allowed the owner to show off his or her skills as a coachman (whip) as this was considered to be a most sporting attribute. Drags came into being

from c1830 and were still being manufactured in the early 1900s. They were finished with black front and rear boot panels and upper body panels, whilst the running gear and lower body ¼ panels would have been finished in maroon, dark blue, green etc.

Slightly heavier than a stagecoach, drags were beautifully appointed with wine cellarets in the hind boots, fittings for tables and sun shades to protect passengers when observing sporting events.

As park drags were privately owned a significant number have survived to the present day. Invariably they were housed on large estates in a coach house, and once they fell out of use they were left where they stood, protected from the weather, unlike the mail and stagecoaches that were either scrapped or left to rot outside. The majority of drags in use today date from 1880 onwards, although there is an early example in the Hull Transport Museum dating from around 1860.

'Revival' road coaches

The railways had destroyed the commercial viability of operating a stagecoach and the Post Office had progressively transferred its operations on to the railways as new routes opened. As a result there was a decline in coaching development from c1850. However, by 1870 an increasing number of young men wished to recreate the 'Golden Age of Coaching' and the 'revival era' came into being.

A new type of coach was required and this was influenced by the design of the park drag. Road coaches were never really commercially viable and they were often sponsored by a group of wealthy patrons, looking to show off their skills as a whip, or were operated by a hotel group for daytime excursions. Many ran from London out to the popular resorts of Tunbridge Wells, Brighton and Canterbury and generally they only operated during the summer months.

The road coaches were heavier than the earlier mail and stagecoaches, weight being less of a consideration now that strict timetables did not apply. Road coaches were beautifully built and their owners had a tendency to 'dress them up' in order to try and replicate the earlier era of coaching. In many ways this is perhaps typical of Victorian exuberance and was not necessarily representative of the earlier era of coaching that they were trying to relive.

It was during this period that Mr James Selby drove the famous revival road coach, *The Old Times,* from London to Brighton and back in 7 hrs and 56 mins in 1888 for a wager of £1,000, the bet being that the run could not be made in less than 8 hrs.

A small number of revival road coaches have survived to this day, and these date from the late 19th C. In all cases, however, it is important to remember that these later revival road coaches must be thought of as a separate entity when comparing them with the earlier mail and stagecoaches.

Unfortunately many books covering coaching will often incorrectly show a revival road coach as an example of a stagecoach. I will not go into the finer details but there are many subtle differences between a revival road coach, a park drag and the earlier mail and stagecoaches. In no particular order, a few of these details are:

- Weight of the coach
- The addition of brakes
- The design of the perch running underneath the coach body
- The shape of the coach body itself
- The adoption of level front and hind boots

The *Royal Umpire* stagecoach

Where then does this leave the *Royal Umpire* stagecoach? At present it is awaiting a full restoration, as its condition precludes any form of conservation to the external surfaces. It would appear to have been restored some 30 or 40 years ago and it is evident that this work was not carried out to a high standard. The coach subsequently suffered areas of damage in Europe when it was involved in an accident. These areas of repair are currently in grey primer, following the limited work carried out by the then owner. Overall the coach is complete but in need of a comprehensive restoration. Some features such as the brakes are not original and may well have been fitted during the work carried out some 40 years ago.

Given the oral history surrounding the coach, where did the *Royal Umpire* come from and how did it survive? Firstly, it is clear that the coach is an early survivor from around 1830, which is immediately apparent from its design. It is possible that the *Royal Umpire* is an early park drag that was repainted some 40 years ago as the *Royal Umpire* stagecoach.

If so, why was this done? There would have been no financial benefit in doing so, as such an early surviving drag or stagecoach would have been of equal value. If it was repainted as the *Royal Umpire,* why choose this name as opposed to many other historic stagecoach names? I would suggest that whoever restored the coach only replicated the original paintwork and that, as such, the *Royal Umpire* is a genuine surviving stagecoach from the pre-railway era.

It is important to remember that the name *Royal Umpire* or *Liverpool Umpire* related to the route on which the coach ran, and that over a 30-year period there were many coaches bearing the name *Umpire* as designs

Name proudly displayed

improved and older models were replaced. As with buses today, there would also have been at least two if not three *Umpires* running at any given time (but not all arriving at once...).

As a stagecoach the *Umpire* would have been allowed to carry parcels but not letter post, which was carried on the mail coaches. How then did the *Umpire* become 'Royal'? It is possible that the Post Office knew that the railway route would be opening and chose to close the mail coach service rather than invest in new coaches on the London to Liverpool route. Therefore in the interim period they subcontracted the letter service to a stagecoach operator and that once the contract had been awarded the *Umpire* route then became *Royal Umpire* (coaches could only display the title 'Royal' if they carried letters).

Assuming that the surviving *Royal Umpire* coach was the last of its kind to operate on the London to Liverpool route, rather than being scrapped and replaced, its chances of survival for historic interest were greatly increased once the route had closed.

Finally, is it possible that the *Royal Umpire* was once a mail coach as it is very light in construction and shares so many features with the *Quicksilver* mail coach? It might be reasonable to assume that the alterations to the surviving *Royal Umpire* could have been made at the time of the transfer of operations from the Post Office to stagecoach contractors.

The Post Office may well have had access to better, though now redundant, mail coaches than those owned by the stagecoach contractors and as part of the contract these mail coaches may have been modified. I have evidence of the changes to the coach, but lack the justification for them and therefore this is my personal supposition.

Construction of the *Royal Umpire* – perch, turntable and wheels

The perch is made from ash with a slight curve where it passes underneath the centre of the body. In later drags and revival road coaches this curve is exaggerated as the coach builders attempted to lower the centre of gravity of the coach body. Iron is fitted to either side of the central ash section of the perch, this composite structure allowing a lightweight and flexible but strong unit that did not deform with use. The transoms fitted to either end of the perch are ash and carry the rear axle and front turntable rubbing plate. The 'U' bolts that hold the axles on to the transoms on the perch and turntable are designed for strength, yet where weight can be saved and the 'u' bolt can perform a dual function the coachbuilder has done so. For example, rather than fit the steps onto the body (as in later designs) the coachbuilder has extended the rear spring shackles into a step arm, again in order to save weight.

The wheels have almost certainly been rebuilt, though the hubs (naves) may be original. Removal of the wheels from the axles revealed a large 'V' stamped into the end of each axle and this probably provides further evidence of the builder being Vidler.

When the coach was sold by Thimberley and Shorland in the late 1970s there was a builder's plaque bearing the name Vidler at the base of each door; however, the story is that these were stolen during the course of the auction as they are no longer evident.

The axles are of an early tapered mail axle design as invented by Vidler's partner, Besant, for the mail coaches. This allows the fitment of alternative wheels with a corresponding taper and adjustment being made using leather washers. The important point to note here is that later mail axles were made with parallel shafts and matched set wheel boxes, thus losing the ability to quickly and easily change a broken wheel.

Finally, the tapered box fitted to each wheel hub features an external oiling point thereby allowing the wheel to be easily lubricated. These features are indicative of a coach designed for regular commercial use with high maintenance requirements.

When built, the *Royal Umpire* would not have been fitted with brakes. These became fashionable on the later drags and revival road coaches. Commercial mail and stagecoaches did not require them and relied on the drag shoe that was fitted to the nearside rear wheel when encountering a steep descent. The braking system that was fitted has now been removed. It probably came from a landau type carriage, as its fittings bore no relation to the coach.

Construction of the *Royal Umpire* - body

Compared with the later park drags and revival road coaches the body design of the *Royal Umpire* is considerably different. The main ash frame is beautifully designed, with weight saving features being apparent. Where an external fitting is mounted through the body frame (such as a lamp bracket) the ash frame is flared out in order to provide increased structural support. In later coaches the framing is heavier throughout.

The steps on the side of the front and rear boots may have been altered, as the mountings do not correspond in every case with the afore-mentioned internal ash 'flaring'. This is evident in the rear boot framing and could possibly add credence to the coach having originally been a mail coach. We have now removed the internal PVC upholstery and this has again revealed a lightweight ash frame within the passenger compartment.

At key structural points the coachbuilder has reinforced the ash frame with supporting ironwork, but this is limited to the front and rear boots; these identical fittings are found on the *Quicksilver* mail coach.

Externally the body's panels are leather covered, which provides greater protection from the elements for a coach running in all weathers. The body panels are softwood rather than the more costly mahogany. The later coaches used mahogany panels and did not feature the leather covering. The front and rear boots finish at different heights and as such the rear roof passengers have a small platform (cricket) on which to place their feet.

The roof section would have carried eight passengers. The rear roof seat may have originally been mounted on the rear heel panel rather than on the roof as it is at present and as such roof passenger numbers would have been reduced to six. The original rear roof seat would have therefore been lower, thereby negating the need for the foot platform. There is evidence of old mounting points in the leatherwork covering the heel panel.

The *Royal Umpire* stagecoach is depicted in a print by James Pollard in about 1830, and this shows the rear seat mounted on the heel panel rather than on the roof as it is at present. The later change to the roof mounted rear seat could have been made in order to increase turnover and hopefully profits.

Construction of the *Royal Umpire* - paintwork

The coach is finished with red running gear (perch, turntable and wheels) whilst the upper panels are black. The lower ¼ panels on the main body and doors are finished in yellow. Originally the finish on these panels would have been of superb quality. As highlighted in Ken Swallow's article, the destination names on the coach are interesting as Lichfield is spelt 'Litchfield' as depicted in James Pollard's print of the Royal Umpire and on another print of the *Umpire* by Elliot it is spelt 'Lichtfield'. As far as I could ascertain Lichfield has never been spelt with a 'T'. Why would two artists and a sign-writer make these mistakes?

Incorrect spelling of 'Lichfield'

Conclusion

The Royal Umpire is a rare example of an early stagecoach. We will probably never know its true history and in many ways this makes it more interesting from an historical viewpoint.

Dartford Tunnel Cycle Service

Tony Newman

I thought it would be interesting to take a closer look at this unusual episode, in order to appreciate how it came about, what was intended and what went wrong. In this article I have drawn extensively on four Ministry of Transport files now at The National Archives under references MT98/107; MT102/69; MT102/227 & MT102/228

A tunnel under the Thames, linking Kent and Essex was envisaged at the end of the 18th C and some work was done towards linking Gravesend with Tilbury, but the scheme ran out of money. A century later, a Thames Tunnel Bill was promoted in 1907 but got no further. By the 1920s there were persuasive arguments in favour of a link between Dartford and Purfleet and a Royal Commission in 1926 recommended this.

A £341m contract was awarded to Charles Brand & Sons Ltd in 1936 and work began from each side of the river. The two pilot tunnels were linked in October 1938 and there were hopes of completing the tunnel by 1942. The outbreak of war stopped everything and work was not resumed until March 1957.

In the pre-war scheme it was intended to charge cyclists a toll of 3d for the joy of pedalling nearly a mile from end to end with heavy traffic continually swirling past and finishing with a climb of 1 in 28 to the surface.

After the war, with even greater volumes of traffic expected, the tunnel authorities were not at all happy about the plight of these cyclists, especially as their numbers were expected to be considerable.

Ford Thames Trader Double-Deck Dartford Cycle Bus - Alan O. Watkins

It seems that these estimates of numbers, which came solely from the Kent County Surveyor in a memo dated 23 March 1955, were so excessive that here can be seen the root cause of the unsound nature of the cyclists' bus project. The memo forecast that as many as 1,500 cyclists a day would wish to use the tunnel at week-ends, presumably to explore the Kent countryside. On week-days there were expected to be fewer cyclists, and their passage would be concentrated in normal peak hours.

After reflecting on this scenario for some time, the planners came up with the idea of excluding cyclists from the tunnel and providing them with some form of carriage which they could board with their bicycles and be taken through the tunnel safely without any effort. For this privilege they would be charged 1/- and, based on the forecast of numbers, it was calculated this would soon generate a very useful income of £1 per hour. Such was the confidence in the figures that it was agreed formally in February 1956 to prohibit cycling through the tunnel.

Working on the forecasts in more detail during the next couple of years, the Dartford Tunnel Committee (DTC) boldly stated in August 1959 that they envisaged up to 100,000 cyclists per year wishing to use the tunnel, with peaks of 240 per hour on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings.

On weekdays, the flow was expected to be about half that number. Thoughts next turned to the kind of vehicles that might be employed on these ferrying duties. In April 1960 the DTC favoured an articulated 'mechanical horse' and trailer; a type of vehicle often used in light goods and parcels traffic.

The Ministry of Transport (MoT) officials were horrified at the prospect of people being carried in trailers and made it quite clear they were not prepared to revise legislation to accommodate this proposal. Consideration turned to a conventional bus that could be modified to carry bicycles and people in roughly equal proportions.

By the autumn of 1960 London Transport engineers had come up with the options of an RT type converted to carry 37 people and 30 bicycles or a single deck RF type with a strengthened roof, to carry 33 people on top and 33 bicycles below.

Unfortunately, the designers were unable to translate these options into workable layouts. They did not give up on the basic concept and by the end of April 1961 had

produced a drawing for a modified Ford Thames Trader vehicle capable of carrying 23 bicycles on the lower deck and their owners on the upper deck. This became the basis for the ultimate design.

By June 1961 the scene was set to put out tenders for five vehicles, incorporating standard London Transport parts, to be ready for operation by 1 March 1963. These would be capable of carrying 23 normal cycles in the front lower-deck compartment and 7 normal cycles or a lesser number of tandems, side-cars or tricycles in the rear compartment.

Access at boarding stations would be from 3ft 6in high platforms on both sides. On the upper deck, reached by a stairway behind the front bulkhead, there would be 33 seats in 14 doubles and a long seat at the rear. All seats would be covered with non-absorbent material to allow for wet clothing of the cyclists.

Seating arrangement of the Cycle Bus - Alan O. Watkins

No doors would be fitted and it was not until after they had entered service that 'the possibility of youngsters leaning out while the bus is in motion' was considered. To counter this unruly behaviour it was decided to display a notice instructing passengers to 'remain in their seats while the bus is in motion'.

Tenders for the bodywork were issued in July 1961; initially to 13 suppliers and two were added subsequently. One of these two was Strachans, whose bid of £2435:15:0 for each body was accepted in November 1961. The Ford chassis were to cost £1175 each, less 17.5% discount and the tender for these was accepted a week later.

For reasons of economy it was decided to lift the complete ban on cyclists riding through the tunnel and to allow them to do this between 10.00pm and 6.00am daily. The bus service would therefore run with 9 departures per hour in peak periods and 6 at all other times. Peak periods were defined as Mondays to Fridays 6.00am-8.00am and 4.00pm-7.00pm with Saturdays and Sundays in summer 9.00am-10.00pm, and in winter 9.00am-6.00pm.

The chassis were delivered to the body builders by March 1962, and the first vehicle was inspected by the Metropolitan Area Vehicle Examiner who found no fault. It had previously been agreed that they would be regarded as single-deckers for the purposes of the Road Traffic Act 1960, but in all other respects they would be treated as double-deckers.

To make the position quite clear it was decided to issue a Special Order dated 16 April 1962 to deal with the Certification of Fitness in respect of these vehicles.

Although the delivery from Strachans was completed in August 1962, one of the five had failed its tilt test the previous month. The results of this test give the opportunity to note the recorded dimensions of the vehicles; 30ft 1in long, 8ft 0in wide and 14ft 6in high. Unladen weight was 6ton 18cwt 3qtr.

Following failure of the tilt test, the vehicles went back first to Ford for chassis modification and then to London Transport's Aldenham works. It is known that one of the modifications was to fit a larger fuel tank with a capacity of 45 gallons, in place of 28 gallons. Other changes were to use stiffer springs and it appears that the seating may have been rearranged so that the front two seats were made into four singles. There is photographic evidence of this. A tilt test was performed at Aldenham in November 1962 and a satisfactory angle of 28 degrees was achieved.

For reasons that are not entirely clear, but as the tunnel was not ready for use, the vehicles appear to have spent the winter in store, possibly at London Transport's Poplar Garage.

A test run, using cycles borrowed from a second-hand shop for the occasion, was carried out at the end of March 1963 to establish whether cycles could be shaken off the racks. How these tests were performed is not apparent. The buses are believed to have been based at Dunton Green Garage for crew training. A considerable amount of media attention was given, following a Press Notice issued by the MoT on 8 May 1963 and reports appeared in such diverse publications as *The Daily Telegraph* (9 May), *Cycling* (29 May) and *Motor Body* (May issue).

The public service, operated from Dartford Garage began on 18 November 1963; the day the Tunnel opened to traffic. Sadly the high hopes of usage were never fulfilled. The monthly totals of cyclists using the buses during the first three months of 1964 were very disappointing, with totals recorded as follows:

	Northbound	Southbound	Total
January	626	734	1360
February	584	640	1224
March	555	688	1243

The consistent bias in a southbound direction is not explained, but more importantly, the totals mask the fact that the greatest number of cyclists in any one day during that period was 155 southbound on 2 February. On Saturday 7 March and also on Sunday 15 March not one cycle was carried northbound.

Something drastic had to be done. It was originally agreed that for £22,000 a year London Transport would operate the service for the Dartford Tunnel Authority (DTA), which had replaced the DTC. At 6d a ride, the figures quoted above for the first three months of 1964 would have produced no more than £34 per month.

By April 1964 it was reported that three of the five buses had been de-licensed a few weeks earlier and the DTA acknowledged that no reliable estimates had ever been made. They had relied solely on one forecast.

At the end of May 1964 some major changes were decided upon. The cost of the service was said to be running at around £2,500 per month. This must have included the London Transport fee and the cost of three DTA staff who manned the special cycle toll booths. The revenue at this time was reportedly around £45 per month, but how this was achieved is not clear.

It was therefore decided to end the contract with London Transport, who would have to sell the buses; probably for scrap, in the absence of any other potential user. Cyclist traffic would be provided for using Land Rover Station Wagons, coupled to an 'Eezion' Trailer.

The cyclists would ride in the Land Rover technically free of charge, but would pay for passage through the tunnel and their bicycles would ride in the trailers. Two Bell Punch Ultimate single unit ticket machines would be ordered for the Land Rovers and the vehicles would be driven by DTA breakdown drivers.

The cycle booth operators would be merged with the main toll booth staff. London Transport appeared to have no objections and the new plan was agreed formally in December 1964.

The evidence as to what happened next is sparse, but *Buses* (July 1965 issue) reported the five buses were still in service and it appears possible that they did not go into store until the end of October that year. They are known to have been sold to a dealer, probably Don Everall of Wolverhampton in March 1966.

This is a salutary tale, the moral of which must surely be 'check data against more than one independent source before embarking upon a large scale contract'.

In *Buses* (April 2000) there was a short paragraph under 'Millar's Tales' which was followed up in *Classic Bus 54* raising questions about these unusual vehicles.

Reports of a brief revival of transport for cyclists in the area occurred in July 2007 when, for a short period, large numbers of cycling enthusiasts wished to watch the Tour de France in the UK. A 50-seater double deck bus was hired with a trailer to convey a similar number of cycles. It operated between 7.00am and 11.00am from the Essex Point Marshalling Area across the QE2 Bridge to a point near the Holiday Inn Express near Dartford and, in the opposite direction from 1.00pm to 7.00pm.

One other example of this unusual form of transport is believed to have operated for a short period in 1963 to carry cycles and riders across the partially completed Forth Bridge, using two specially adapted half-cab Leylands.

Chris Salaman adds:

The Dartford Tunnel Cycle Buses were based on the Ford Thames Trader lorry chassis with a 6D diesel engine, as opposed to the PSV R-type. The lorry chassis was several inches higher than the R-type, which had an offset differential to allow the lower ride height. This probably goes at least some way to explain the problems encountered when meeting the tilt test.

A standard bicycle rack was fitted so that the cycles could be carried safely without the need for time consuming restraints.

The passenger stairway was open, which allowed for a possible fall from the top deck when in motion. It also meant that exhaust fumes were sucked into the upper deck and that litter was sucked into the stairwell.

The seat coverings were the same as used on the top decks of the subsequent London Transport open-toppers used on sightseeing work.

Why a Ford chassis? Were Strachans a Ford Agent? Why not a converted RT, as there were hundreds available at the time, even if only on a trial bases?

Answers on a postcard, email, letter, telephone or by pigeon please. RL

'Safety First' on the Roads, c.1916-2009

Mike Esbester

Today we are used to receiving messages warning us to be safe on the roads – just think of the tv, radio, cinema and newspaper adverts, posters, and leaflets discussing excess speed, mobile phone use and drink-driving. These techniques – using the media to try to persuade people to change their behaviour – are so commonplace that if they are noticed, it is assumed that they have ever been thus. Yet the origins of road safety education are comparatively recent, a product of the early twentieth century.

In this short article I would like to introduce members of the R&RTHA to the history of British road safety education. I should start by confessing that I am a railway historian by nature: the research that this piece has grown out of was undertaken at the Institute of Railway Studies and Transport History at the University of York/ National Railway Museum. I was looking at safety education aimed at railway employees, first introduced by the Great Western Railway in 1913 but rapidly copied by the other major railway companies. This appears to have been the starting point for safety education in Britain – the GWR got the idea from the USA, where education had been used since 1906. Since doing this research I have become interested in safety more widely – in other industries, and in public life: including on the roads.

To start with the railways, it is worth pointing out that the twentieth century was a period of great change in how we dealt with safety. From an ad hoc, formal approach that told people what to do, things altered to a more systematic, but informal, approach that made use of education to try to persuade people to change their behaviour. This change did not simply happen on the railways; very rapidly it spread out to wider society, particularly where road safety was concerned.

The roads have produced a great volume of safety education, as they have now been a public concern for nearly 100 years. In 1912, over 20,000 people were injured or killed on London's streets alone. With the growth of motoring, particularly after the First World War, casualties on the roads, the majority of which were non-drivers like pedestrians and cyclists, grew to alarming levels. Consequently much effort was devoted to educating road users as to their rights and responsibilities.

The London General Omnibus Company (LGOC) appears to have been the first British motoring organisation to use safety education, under the direction of its Operating Manager, Herbert Blain. In 1913 the LGOC introduced its safety material, including posters for staff and, by 1916, training films showing right and wrong ways of driving buses. London newspapers carried announcements aimed at the public, informing them how to get on and off the bus safely and how to cross the road. Buses were painted with slogans such as, 'Is it safe? Stop and look first', and films and leaflets were said to be in preparation. Also in 1916, a booklet was prepared for LGOC employees, using informal, conversational language and photographs to show safe and unsafe practices. I have yet to find any evidence of these items, so I would be particularly interested to hear from any R&RTHA members who might know more about this.

LGOC safety messages on a wartime MET bus

Blain was a keen advocate of safety education, and was instrumental in establishing the London 'Safety First' Council in 1917, a consortium of parties interested in promoting public safety. Following this, many other towns and cities set up their own 'Safety First' councils, coming together under the banner of the National 'Safety First' Association (NSFA) in 1924, in which Blain played a key role. The NSFA became the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) in 1941, and this organisation continues to this day. Although the NSFA's remit was general public safety, for which it received government support, much of its work came to concentrate on the most immediate and visible source of problems: road safety.

A great deal of this safety education focussed on non-drivers; children in particular were targeted, on the basis that if they were instructed when young safety habits would stick. Road safety was taught at schools, and the

NFSA ran essay competitions for school children after 1920. RoSPA and its predecessors were responsible for issuing some of the most immediately attractive safety items: posters. Designed to be eye-catching and placed in public places, they had to convey their messages quickly and simply. Early posters featured only text, but by the 1920s they had taken to using images to attract attention; such posters have been used throughout the twentieth century and up to the present day. Safety Councils in individual towns also produced safety films, showing road users where dangers might arise. I imagine that these would have been shown in schools or before the main feature in cinemas. Whether or not these posters and other techniques were effective in reducing casualties is difficult to tell: we simply cannot link education directly with changes in people's behaviour.

Nonetheless, the state has evidently been convinced that education was a valuable approach to improving road safety. Not only has it supported the work of the NSFA/ RoSPA, but after the Second World War it established the Central Office of Information. This body coordinated Britain's public information films, including many dealing with road safety, from the 1950s onwards: some of the best known include *Tufty* and the *Green Cross Code*. Many celebrities of the day were used to front these campaigns, including Jon Pertwee, Ken Dodd, Jimmy Hill, and the cast of Dad's Army

In the 1930s, when people renewed their driving licences, the NSFA worked with the government to include a 20-page booklet with the new licence, entitled *Have a Care There*. It was a small item – just 5x3½ inches – and could be conveniently carried in the pocket (or lost). It used cartoon-type images and relatively small amounts of text to try to persuade people to drive in a more considerate manner, obey the road signs, and urge car owners to make sure that their vehicle was maintained properly. In the same vein, the NSFA also issued the 17-page booklet, *Many Happy Returns*, a further series of hints and tips, illustrated by Fougasse. I doubt that such a 'gentlemanly' appeal to one's better nature would carry much weight today! Such booklets and leaflets were (and are) quite attractive. They were issued at least until the 1970s, so presumably it was felt that they were serving some useful purpose in persuading people to act with greater caution when on the roads.

In 1934, the NSFA worked with W.D. & H.O. Wills, the cigarette manufacturers, to issue a series of 50 road safety cigarette cards, together with an album to mount them in, entitled *Safety First*. Leslie Hore-Belisha, Minister of Transport, provided a foreword, extolling the virtues of the cards and expressing his approval that 'the cards will be disseminated among the children, who are unhappily all too frequently numbered among the victims of road accidents.'[1] Even if the children had obtained the cards from a smoking adult, I do not imagine we would find a government official today welcoming children's contact with the produce of cigarette manufacturers, no matter how beneficial the subject matter!

NSFA/WD & HO Wills cigarette card album - RoSPA

The cards were aimed at different parts of the community of road users: 33 expressly for drivers, 10 for pedestrians (particularly children), 6 for cyclists, and 1 for motorcyclists. Of course, this did not stop one user group reading the advice intended for another group. The cards were very colourful, and contained captions that explained the scene portrayed in brief; the album had more extensive captions that gave greater detail and advice. As with all safety education, the age-old problem remained: given that these were consulted at leisure, away from the dangerous environment, how effective can they have been? Would people remember the advice at the crucial moment? It is impossible to know.

In addition to the work of the NSFA/ RoSPA, private companies seized the topic – whether for the public good or as a profit-seeking means of self-promotion is up to you to decide. We have seen the Wills cigarette cards; other firms produced safety badges and safety games: I have seen card games from the 1930s and 1950s, and board games from the 1950s through to the 1980s. In the 1950 and 60s children's handkerchiefs were

produced featuring safety messages. How much attention the child would have paid to these messages is, of course, open to debate, but it was yet another format for road safety education. And the drinks industry also tried to maintain favourable public relations by persuading drivers to drink responsibly: since the 1960s beer mats have been used to carry safety messages, though as the driver was presumably in the pub drinking it is once again uncertain how effective this would have been!

In 1960 the *Daily Mirror* organised an exhibition at the RBA Galleries on Pall Mall, entitled 'Battle of the Roads', featuring facts, figures and graphic photographs of road traffic crashes. A booklet of the exhibition, of the same name, was subsequently published and endorsed by Ernest Marples, Minister of Transport. A variety of organisations and interest groups issued leaflets dealing with cycling, pedestrian and general road safety. At times it must have seemed that road safety education

RoSPA Safe Driving medals

was everywhere.

One of the problems in promoting safety amongst commercial drivers was the lack of a professional body that covered everyone. Unlike railway workers, virtually all of whom were employed by an overarching company, before nationalisation there were hundreds, if not thousands, of service providers, often individuals. These providers did not necessarily have the resources to produce safety education for their employees – even if they wanted to. There was little incentive to spend time and money on producing educative materials if their rivals were not. The bigger organisations – like the LGOC – might have produced safety education, but it is likely that they were the exception.

Instead, the NSFA came to co-ordinate road safety education material for professional drivers, producing posters and the like and making them available (at cost) to interested parties. In the 1920s the NSFA launched a 'Safe Driving' competition, rewarding commercial drivers for managing to remain free from incident 'for which they were in any way responsible' across the course of a year - *not* the same thing as remaining completely free from incident! Each year they were awarded a diploma, until at five years a medal was granted. For each year thereafter, a dated bar was added to the medal's ribbon.[2] Drawing on this, the haulage industry established its own body, the Road Operators' Safety Council, in 1955, to promote safety. They followed the safe driving competition model, awarding participants badges or medals, presumably to be worn on the lapel with pride.

Whether such techniques were adequate incentives to make a real difference and convince drivers to pay greater attention is, sadly, unknowable – but I would imagine that something more tangible, like a reduced insurance premium, would have had a greater effect.

We can see that road safety has occupied a great deal of attention since the turn of the twentieth century – and for good reason. In the 1930s road casualties were measured in the hundreds of thousands each year. Whilst this figure has since declined, as ever it is impossible to say for certain that education, as opposed to engineering or improved regulation, has had anything to do with this. Nevertheless, this has not stopped the various organisations involved in promoting education, particularly the government and RoSPA, from producing vast numbers of items intended to promote road safety, as this article has shown. I am sure that many other methods were used to try to promote road safety.

I am looking for feedback: the items that I mention here are only those that I have run across, and I suspect that these are the tip of the iceberg. If any of you know of other items, I would be very interested to hear from you. I am particularly interested in tracing the development of institutional approaches to road safety – how firms like the LGOC dealt with safety and what material they produced: I would be grateful for any suggestions or thoughts on any points raised.

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[1] L. Hore-Belisha, 'Foreword', Safety First cigarette album (c.1934).

[2] See also: A. Major, 'Some safe driving medals', *Transport History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Autumn 1978, pp. 142-53.

Members' Forum

Andrew Waller:
Re: RJ Williamson's query (NL57): this appears to be Bristol C45 (AE1156) in its initial 1911 form, with a Bristol 22 seat charabanc body. Its chassis number is believed to have been 1015 and it was one of three similar vehicles that belonged to Bristol Tramways & Carriage Co. Ltd., which rebodied it with a 22-seat bus body by 1914. In May of that year it went to Imperial Tramways, in Middlesbrough, thence to Middlesbrough Corporation in April 1921.

Maurice Doggett adds:
The vehicle was new in June 1911 and was unusual at the time in that the body had a flat floor, rather than a floor sloping up towards the rear. There were 5 full-width bench-type seats for 4 passengers each with room for 2 more beside the driver. Another rare feature for the time was the large glass windscreen.

The other 2 vehicles of the trio remained in service with BTCC until about 1922 with one of them (AE 1157) reportedly rebodied in similar fashion to AE 1156 at an unknown date.

The vehicle appears to have been photographed outside the gates of Ashton Park, Bristol when it was possibly on an excursion or on tour duty.

Tony Newman:
In response to Tony Beadle's query (NL57), I can report that there are two files about Army Motor Lorries and Waggon Co Ltd at The National Archives.

One is the Company Registration File at BT31 22578/138203 and the other is J13 7486.

This latter file needs to be ordered in advance of a visit as it is not stored at Kew. It is in the High Court of Justice series and the content of these vary enormously from just a single sheet of paper recording a court ruling, to pages of affidavits containing detailed information about the case. This one is likely to augment the report in *The Times*.

Chris Salaman:
Dave Bubier's piece (NL57) raised several very poignant points as regards origins within the 'smalls' carrying business, foremost of which was whether carriers had heraldic 'Arms'. Most definitely they did!

The carriers themselves have origins going back to mediaeval times when the first Fellowship of Carmen was formulated in the City of London. By 1517, this took a more official endorsement when the carters entered into a contract with the City dignitaries, in which they pledged to carry the King's provisions on one hand, and also cleanse the streets of rubbish on the other, besides carting general goods from the river wharves etc., in lieu of an agreed payment. They also became Freemen of the City with its relevant privileges, and to identify their carts introduced 'cart marking' on an annual basis - the forerunner of today's commercial licensing system. They were referred to as 'Carmen', a name that became well and truly established in the mid-nineteenth century, but was predominantly used in urban areas as opposed to rural areas where one usually still referred to them as 'Carters'. The rural carters also provided a service not provided in urban areas, that of combined goods and passenger carriage, due to the lack of other facilities.

I'm pleased to see that he made a clear distinction between carriers and waggoners (the latter being the long distance carriers). They all used the Tavern as a meeting point as had been the custom for centuries. By the nineteenth century many would have had a very prominent board hung in their entrance windows announcing the services available from their local carrier, and that the tavern proprietors were acting as the latter's agents! As time moved on, the smalls or parcel carriers became more widely advertised and we saw the establishment of many of the great names in this trade, amongst which was James Paterson who incidentally hailed from the border country but eventually started his business in London, after moving south and purchasing an existing small parcel carrier business from a widow in the heart of the City.

As for 'tools of trade' – probably the most likely description would be the wearing of a heavy leather apron and inevitable pencil tucked behind his ear! Many larger concerns issued their drivers with brass/enamel number badges, usually worn on arm bands.

Tony Newman:
Companies House at Edinburgh will be moving on Tuesday 26 May 2009 from 37 Castle Terrace to new buildings at Fountainbridge, Edinburgh Quay 2.

The two buildings are less than one mile apart and the move will put Companies House in the heart of one of the area,s newest business developments.

The change has been planned over a period of time to ensure that disruption to paper-based services is minimal. Customers of the electronic-based services will notice no change as a result of the move.

The shortest route from Castle Terrace is via Johnston Terrace, Lawnmarket and High Street.

The contact telephone number is 0303 1234 500.

Book Reviews

A History of the Great Northern Railway of Ireland Road Motor Services 1925-1958 – a Mysterious and Enigmatic tale.
Sam Simpson
Venture Publications Ltd, 123 Pikes Lane, Glossop SK13 3EH.
ISBN 978-1905-304-097 £30.00

If you know your Irish history – and you should – you will find this a fascinating book. Despite the title it extends to the railway business, and it goes back to the formation of the railway company in 1875. In 1906 the GNR(I) obtained a half share in the County Donegal Railway, along with the Midland Railway, and with the establishment of the Irish Free State it became a major cross-border company, with all that this involved politically. In 1923 the General Manager, John Bagwell, a *Cumann nan Gaedheal* nominated member of the Irish Senate, was briefly kidnapped by IRA irregulars during the Civil War. He was succeeded in 1926 by J B Stephens, but while the company contracted with bus operators to provide feeder services it was not to be until 1929 that it owned any vehicles of its own. G B Howden became General Manager in 1929.

Chapter Two deals with 'The Turbulent Thirties'. In 1932 the government of the Free State introduced bus licensing, which applied to GNR services, and then in the following year de Valera's economic war with Britain led to GNR's compulsory purchase of bus companies including H M S Catherwood Ltd. In 1934 a further Act of the *Oireachtas* led to GNR starting to produce its own vehicles at Dundalk, a policy with which the book is very much concerned.

Chapter Three, 'The Strike, which nearly ended it all', covers major problems, to be followed by Chapter Four, dealing with the problems of County Donegal. Only in Chapter Five does the story turn to the GNR Road Motor Services, passenger and freight.

It was the formation of the Northern Ireland Road Transport Board in 1935 that left the GNR as a major bus operator in the Free State, and when the Ulster Transport Authority was formed in 1948, followed by substantial railway closures, the GNR became the effective cross-border bus company. On 1 October 1958 *Coras Iompair Eireann* (CIE) took over the services and the vehicles, which brings an end to the subject of this book.

All of this and a great deal more is covered, with much information and many prints of the GNR(I) vehicles. The lack of an index is a serious weakness for such a complicated story, but the book will appeal to everybody interested in the period, or in vehicles.

John Hibbs

The Official History of Privatisation – Volume 1, The formative years 1970-1987.
David Parker
Routledge, 2009, ISBN 978-0415469166 £55.00,

This book is a most important contribution to our knowledge of 'recent events', and Volume 2 will be much looked forward to. As well as dealing with the general political background, and the wide range of industries concerned, Chapter 10, 'Privatising bus transport', goes behind what was actually done and explains the issues concerned and the discussions that took place. Chapter 6 goes into the complexities of the National Freight Corporation. There is a great deal to be learned from this excellent text, which is strongly recommended.

John Hibbs

WEST MON
Michael Yelton & Chris Taylor
Venture Publications Ltd, 123 Pikes Lane, Glossop SK13 3EH
ISBN 978-1905-304-264 112 pages, illustrated, £15.95

West Mon, or to give its full title The West Monmouthshire Omnibus Board, is best known for the formidable Bargoed Hill that its drivers had to navigate in specially engineered buses. But it was unusual too in its management structure, a board whose nine members represented two neighbouring Urban District Councils – six from Bedwellty and three from Mynyddislwyn.

As the authors explain, West Mon was not strictly speaking a municipal operator, because it was incorporated in its own right under the Mynyddislwyn Urban District Council Act of 1926, and had its own coat of arms. Powerful local loyalties in the valleys helped fend off outside competitors, but West Mon still faced the challenges of poor roads that were liable to subsidence and landslip, not to mention The Hill.

This feature was made still more fearsome by a narrow double bend under a very low railway bridge right below the steepest part of the gradient. The Hill gets its own 11-page appendix, copiously illustrated with photographs that dramatically illustrate the difficulties that West Mon's drivers faced: those who drove The Hill were paid extra.

The strong Labour traditions in the valleys favoured publicly owned bus operation, as opposed to private companies, and West Mon began by taking over services within the two districts run by Lewis & James' Western and Sirhowy Valleys concern

West Mon continued in existence until 1974, when the

Labour government reorganisation of local authorities transferred the board's assets to Islwyn Borough Council. Yelton and Taylor have produced a comprehensive history of the board's activities over the 48 years in which it functioned. Thirty pages of the book are devoted to a detailed list of the buses it ran, and almost every type is well illustrated. There are 138 black & white photographs and nine colour images on the cover and end-papers.

The book is no. 18 in Venture Publications' Super Prestige Collection.

Andrew Waller

Northern Roadways
Garry Ward
Venture Publications, 131 Pikes Lane, Glossop, SK13 8EH
ISBN 978 190530 4233 96pp £14.95

This title, No.17 in the Super Prestige series fills a gap by providing a well detailed history of a relatively short-lived business, set up in Glasgow in 1941 by a solicitor and a retail businessman to provide workers' contract services. It branched out for a period into local bus operations in Ayrshire and into high profile express services, then reverted mainly into schools contracts from outer Glasgow housing estates.

Contract work continued after the war and private hire and tour operations were soon added to take advantage of post-war travel demand in a relatively car-less society. New vehicle purchases included AEC Regals, Bedford OBs, Crossleys and Daimler CVD6s. Coachwork was by Duple, Plaxton, Scottish Aviation and Stewart of Wishaw (2 coaches only, sold after a year's service).

Northern Roadways express services had begun modestly in 1946 with a Glasgow-Prestwick Airport link. In 1949, two businesses were acquired in Kilbirnie and Ayr and a subsidiary, Northern Ayrshire Coaches Ltd, was set up to provide for their operations. In October 1950 numerous applications for further express licences were lodged by Northern Roadways. Significantly, approval for Glasgow-London was granted in time for the Festival of Britain in 1951; express services were also licensed to Birmingham, Scarborough and later to Bournemouth (a marathon trip in the context of the early 1950s).

The growth and actual operation of these services are well described, as well as operating problems. Despite successfully resisting licensing objections, the high point of Northern Roadways seems to have been reached in 1952. Difficulties with capital were reported in 1954, one of the two founders withdrawing from the business. Coaches were sold, then hired back for express services, followed by the sell-out of services and goodwill to Scottish Omnibuses in 1956. Tours, including those involving the company owned Ben Wyvis Hotel at Strathpeffer Spa required the purchase of some new coaches after express work ended.

A review can scarcely do justice to the wealth of fascinating detail collected for and incorporated in this study. The illustrations are equally comprehensive; not all have reproduced sharply, but, to end on a positive note, the Scottish Aviation, Stewart and Burlingham coaches are handsomely depicted.

Richard Storey

News Bulletin

From: The Commercial Motor - February 3, 1950

Drivers Refuse Work with R.H.E.

After specialising for more than 20 years in the haulage of tyres and raw materials for a local tyre factory, Mr T. Allen, of Stretton, Burton-on-Trent, was offered the job of a driver when his business was acquired by the R.H.E. The Commercial Motor reporter noted that 'refusal' would have been a euphemism for Mr Allen's response.

Mr Allen previously suggested that he should continue to run his four 4-ton and three 12-ton vehicles for the Executive as the only 'tyre fleet' in the district engaged on long distance work to ports.

On learning that his offer had been rejected, 9 of the 12 drivers, representing old hands decided to seek employment elsewhere. Upwards of 15% of the outgoing materials carried by Mr Allen's vehicles comprised carbon black, which penetrates any type of clothing. At least two cold baths and one hot bath are required to cleanse it from the skin. For this work, Mr Allen paid 3s per ton 'dirt money', which the drivers considered adequate. It was reported that the 1s per ton offered by the R.H.E. was not acceptable to any driver.

The fleet comprised 2 ERFs, 3 Jensens and 2 Fodens, valued by Mr Allen's valuer and negotiator, Mr K. Firth Butterfield, at £8,307, subject to betterment or worsement. The stock evaluation was £1,874, subject to agreement.

Mr Allen had purchased the business from another haulier, Mr L. Rodgers, in 1942.

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