

ROADS & ROAD TRANSPORT HISTORY CONFERENCE

NEWSLETTER No.4 July 1993

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NEW MEMBERS

We extend a special welcome to the Commercial Vehicle & Road Transport Club; from the beginning we have been particularly anxious to expand our membership to cover the important field of road haulage. Further details of the Club are given on a later page.

We also welcome the following new Associate Members. Their particular interests and affiliations (where they have been declared) are shown in brackets.

F.R.Beaumont, 20 Chestnut Avenue, Gosfield, Halstead, Essex CO9 1TD.
[Morris Register.]

J.M.Burrows, Flat 7, 87 Sussex Place, Slough, Berks SL1 1NN. [see below]

Arthur Ingram, 73 Nags Head Road, Enfield, Middlesex EN3 7AA. [History of the British goods vehicle industry, British road transport companies before nationalisation, and large goods vehicle operators. Author of 14 books on these subjects.]

G.Langley, 22 Percy Avenue, Cullercoats, North Shields, Tyne & Wear
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Gordon Mustoe, 4 Sutton Lodge, Blossomfield Road, Solihull B91 1NB.

A.G.Newman, 30 Old Eaton Road, Rugeley, Staffs WS15 2EZ. [see below]

C.T.Shears, 9 Hillcrest Park, Exeter, Devon EX4 4SH. [Collecting buses and coaches; collecting film material on buses in Devon.]

S.A.Skeavington, 6 Breckbank, Forest Town, Mansfield NG19 0PZ. [Printers and suppliers of bus and tram tickets.]

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Thank you to those who responded to the appeal in the Newsletter no.3, or to my personalised arm-twisting, with contributions to this issue, which is the longest so far. More for the next issue please. A new feature, which provides scope for others to emulate, is the notes submitted by some of our growing number of Associate Members on their special interests. It is hoped that this will help to fulfil one of the Conference's aims of bringing together those with mutual interests.

NOTES ON ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Charles Dunbar asks for a correction to the statement in the last issue that his principal interest is the road haulage industry. In spite of being author of *The Rise of Road Transport 1919-1939* (1981), his life-long interest has in fact been passenger road transport, particularly tramways, the history of which he started researching in 1919. He is a member of the Tramway & Light Railway Society (president 1968-72, now vice-president), the Light Rail Transit Association, the Tramway Museum Society, the Omnibus Society (a vice-president) and the Transport Ticket Society (president 1966).

Roger Bailey's family has been involved in the bus industry from his great grandfather's time. His mother drove buses in Coventry and later became the city's only woman bus inspector. However, he never wanted to drive buses himself; his interest is in their evolution. Over the years he has travelled the world, studying in the streets of many major cities. More recently he has taken on the challenge of understanding the history of transport in Coventry, particularly its coach operators.

He then took the unusual step of recording history by means of video interviews. This has allowed many fond memories to be recorded by former drivers and owners, together with shots of some of the more recently delivered coaches. Famous people like Harry Shaw are now logged on video, as well as transport related sites which are now disappearing under lines of bulldozers.

He would welcome help in tracing the history of the 100 or more operators that had bases in Coventry.

J.M.Burrows gives his particular interests as: the history and development of London Transport bus, tram and trolleybus routes from 1934, including details of the destination blinds used thereon. He is building up a card index of LT bus route changes for the years 1934-84, and is currently researching the operational lives of the experimental 'Q' class vehicles.

The main interests of Tony Newman are: trolleybuses, gas buses, methods of fare collection, the effects of World War II on passenger transport in the UK, and the relationship between the Metropolitan Police and road passenger transport in London. He has recently been investigating the records relating to road passenger transport at the Public Record Office -- see below.

THE KITHEAD TRUST

The Kithead Trust was established for the preservation of material relating to transport in general and the omnibus industry in particular. With the dissolution of the National Bus Company, a considerable volume of archival papers, especially relating to planning, technical, vehicle, trade union, and individual company matters, which was being disposed of was not deemed appropriate for deposit at the Public Record Office.

The Trust is so named because it leases a specially constructed extension of the premises of Kithead Ltd. In fact, the continued preservation of the NBC papers was only achieved by the generous action of the company, which agreed to build the extension for the purpose. The cost was met by loans from many concerned private individuals and the generous responses of a number of societies.

A majority of the Trust's archive is NBC-related, although the files of the erstwhile Association of Public Passenger Transport Operators and its predecessors are included, whilst the Birmingham Transport Historical Group has deposited its own considerable archive. Other material has been donated (or bequeathed) from private collections. Additional material continues to be received and recent substantial deposits have included those made by Alder Valley Ltd, Wilts & Dorset Ltd, Eastern National Ltd, and the Department of Transport.

The work of preparing the archive for cataloguing continues, but facilities can be made available for genuine researchers. At present resources are concentrated on listing older, or previously published, material as the majority of the papers of the NBC period are restricted under the thirty-year rule. It is confidently expected that the archive will become a valuable resource for historians in future years.

The Trust has been accepted and registered by the Charity Commissioners as an educational charity. Although the labour involved in administration and cataloguing is provided free by members of the Trust and their supporters, the trustees need help to meet the running costs of rates, rent, depreciation and insurance. If you would be kind enough to make a donation or, even better if you are a taxpayer, to execute a deed of covenant, you will help to secure the future of this important archive.

The address of the Trust is: De Salis Drive, Hampton Lovett, Droitwich Spa, Worcs WR9 0QE (phone 0905 776681).

COMMERCIAL VEHICLE & ROAD TRANSPORT CLUB

Founded in 1965, the aim of the CVRTC is to bring together all those interested in heavy commercial vehicles and the road haulage industry -- an important part of the transport industry sadly neglected by other enthusiast organisations at that time. Before long it became clear that its membership was particularly keen on the post-war era and, whilst earlier times were not to be neglected, this is where the emphasis should lie.

Its newsletter, *CVRTC News*, at first appeared somewhat irregularly, but has since grown into an illustrated publication of 12-14 A4 pages, running to eight issues per annum. Contributions from members are encouraged, particularly those of an historic nature which prove very popular amongst readers. Currently reaching the end of its first series is a regular feature, 'Backtrack', which aims to stimulate interest by listing details of road transport companies from the past and seeking further information from among the 450 members. The success of this series has been pleasing. A regular part of this publication is a 'small ads' spot, which caters not only for vehicles and parts, but also contacts with regard to research into the past; many members have archive collections of particular aspects of the Club's interests.

An important part of members' activities is vehicle preservation. Although the Club does not itself own any vehicles, among the membership hundreds of vehicles are owned. Many of these are restored and attend Club events, the principal of which is held in Rugby each summer and at which over two hundred vehicles, mainly preserved but also including some interesting modern trucks, attend.

In 1985 the Club was bequeathed the collection of commercial vehicle photographs and archives of the late Denis Miller. At present over 1000 photographs have been catalogued and prints are available for sale. More will be made available in the future.

Subscription to the CVRTC is £7 per annum; application forms and a sample newsletter can be obtained from 8 Tachbrook Road, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 2QS. Bona fide researchers seeking information may contact the Secretary at the same address. An s.a.e. would be appreciated.

NOTES FROM IAN YEARSLEY, RESEARCH COORDINATOR

Queueing for Buses

The question in Newsletter no.2 brought forth several replies. Neil D.G. Mackenzie, Executive Director & General Manager, Lothian Region Transport, sent details of a Parliamentary Question on the subject on 12 March 1941. Mr Wooton-Davies asked the Minister of Transport whether, in view of the crushing to death of a little boy in a rush for an omnibus at Carlisle, he would advise all local authorities to prescribe the introduction of the queue system for all omnibus and tramway services? Mr E.Brown, replying for the Minister, said that some local authorities already exercised powers under local bye-laws, but he would take up the matter with the Minister.

The Minister was clearly impressed, for on 16 March 1942 the Regulation of Traffic (Formation of Queues) Order was issued, coming into force on 12 April 1942. This stated that, where barrier rails were provided, intending passengers should queue between them and board the vehicle in that order; where no barrier rails existed, any six or more people should form a queue and keep in a line of not more than two abreast on the footway. There was a specific prohibition of queue-jumping.

The 1942 Order was reproduced recently in the Tramway Museum Society's *Contact* newsletter; Neil Mackenzie also points out that Edinburgh Corporation had the power to regulate queues under its bye-laws.

A study of Municipal Tramways Association papers and the trade press might well show tramway undertakings applying queueing regulations much earlier. The picture of Manchester's first queue barrier on page 56 of *The Manchester Tramways* (Yearsley and Groves, 1988) was taken sometime between the end of 1903 and the beginning of 1914, probably before 1910. The London County Council acquired powers to make bye-laws relating to queues in the LCC (Tramways & Improvements) Act 1912.

Hand-Propelled Vehicles

The question about hand-propelled vehicles (see Newsletters 2 & 3) seems to have opened an interesting line of research. R.W.Kidner recalls the following in the village of Sidcup, Kent in the 1920s:

Outside porter: a flat on two wheels for collecting and delivering luggage and parcels to/from the SE&CR station;

Scouts' cart: a large two-wheeled cart for carrying tents, etc for weekend camps; two boys on the handle pole in front, preceded by others hauling lines attached to the axle ends;

Mortuary wagon: a narrow lidded body on three wire wheels, pushed from the rear; it was kept at the police station and was last noted c.1921 when a stockbroker fell dead running for a train;

Milk wagons: three wheels, brass tank at rear, brass taps; jugs hung around a rail; perhaps three in the village;

Builders' push carts: two-plank bodies about 4ft x 5ft, used by local builders, the electricity company, urban council, etc for taking shovels, pipes and so on to small repair jobs; maybe ten;

He adds, "I do not recall any market barrows in the High Street, but there may have been some. At the time I am thinking of, there were nine motor cars in the village, two motor lorries and one steam lorry. There was also, of course, a lot of through traffic on the Maidstone road."

Mr Kidner's notes remind me of a photograph I once saw of a hand-propelled ambulance. This was an ordinary two-wheeled cart on wire wheels, extended front and rear to form a stretcher. The head end, at the rear, was fitted with a folding hood like a French fiacre or a pram, and it was being propelled by a policeman.

Steel Tyres on Horse-Drawn Vehicles

A new query: Was legislation introduced at some time in the late 1920s or the 1930s forbidding the building of new horse-drawn vehicles on steel rimmed tyres? If so, it would account for the continual rebuilding of existing vehicles by the cartage departments of the LM&SR and other railway companies. Considering the still widespread use of horse-drawn vehicles for local delivery and cartage work till after the Second World War, remarkably few new vehicles on rubber tyres were built. Was this the reason and, if so, what was the legislation?

WIDER ROADS AND BIGGER BUSES

Comment by Richard Storey on the article in Newsletter no.3

John Hibbs' fascinating account of the evolution of PSV size triggered a memory of schoolboy visits to W.L.Thurgood's coachworks at Ware in the early 1950s. I recall how proud their works manager was of a seating innovation which apparently permitted the installation of 37 seats in what would otherwise have been a 35 seat body. This was simply achieved by a thin, vertical extension of the seat back, covered in fabric, thereby distinguishing it from a grab rail. This device gave a technically correct fore and aft measurement between the back of one seat and the 'front' edge of the top of the seat behind. The gain on each seat equal to the thickness of the rear squab, when cumulated, allowed additional seating capacity.

DONCASTER ROAD TRANSPORT AND THE STRIKES OF 1926

By Philip L.Scowcroft

This note is supplemental to previous writings in the Newsletter glancing at the effect that post-1918 coal strikes had on road transport. The most significant of that series of strikes was of course the General Strike of 1926 and the accompanying miners' strike. Doncaster was (and is, if only just) the focus of an important mining area and the effect these stoppages had on its public road transport will I hope be of interest.

When the General Strike was called on 3 May 1926, the Doncaster Corporation trams and buses stopped running altogether as the staff walked out; but, according to the *Doncaster Gazette* of 7 May, the privately owned buses in the area, much less 'unionised' than the Corporation's undertaking and which outnumbered the Corporation buses (then about 27) by about nine to one (and this ignores 'pirates') were 'running as usual'. Whether all were is open to some doubt, as pickets were out and there were some ugly incidents involving goods vehicles. One story is worth recalling. Later in May, Leonard James Heath was prosecuted for plying for hire with a Finningley bus in Waterdale, Doncaster without a hackney carriage license. Heath, whose wife owned the Finningley operation (in 1993 it still exists as Leon Motors), said in his defence that his driver was afraid of strike pickets, so he took over to keep the bus on the road. The magistrates dismissed the case on payment of costs. Heath was less lucky in other brushes with the law about this time. It is probable that most 'private' buses kept running during the General Strike.

The Corporation transport workers returned to duty at noon on 14 May, two days after the T.U.C. called off the strike. The miners remained out and this had an effect on public transport locally. Although in earlier coal strikes the Corporation trams had been compelled to stop running for lack of fuel to power the electricity generators, this was not the case in 1926. The increased cost of electricity because of the coal strike was reported to the Corporation's Electricity & Tramways Committee on 19 October 1926. The matter was adjourned, and again at the two following monthly Committees, then no doubt quietly forgotten. Fewer people used the Corporation buses and trams during the period May-December 1926. Despite a special holiday bus service to local beauty spot Sandall Beat,

Whitsuntide traffic receipts were down on 1925. On the Saturday the trams took £270, the buses £123; on the Monday tram receipts were £216, bus receipts £99; the 1925 figures were £351, £197, £277 and £147, a drop in total of 27%. A similar story was told by the tram receipts during the September St Leger Week: on the Tuesday £477 was taken and on Wednesday (St Leger Day) £772, against the 1925 equivalents of £555 and £876.

What of the bus services from Doncaster to mining villages like Armthorpe, Hatfield (Stainforth), Harworth, New Edlington and Rossington during the strike period? They were less patronised, for sure, for as local newspapers noted, miners and their dependants had no money for fares into town. But, despite the length of the strike (from the beginning of May to October or November -- the miners drifted back to work at differing dates), I have come across no operator being forced out of business due to lack of patronage. Indeed the evidence of renewals of motor omnibus licenses by the Corporation's Watch Committee (144 in September 1925, 265 in September 1926, 367 in September 1927, 424 in September 1928) suggests that the strikes had little permanent adverse effect on bus growth in the area. During the immediate period of the strikes growth was almost static, as the renewal figure for March 1927 (the licenses were renewed for six month periods) was 267; but it seems the surge forward recommenced almost immediately the strikes were over.

ROAD TRANSPORT ARCHIVES

Among the recent acquisitions of Coventry City Record Office are plans of tram routes in Coventry, 1897-1941.

Accessions to Repositories, the annual publication of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, reports the following deposits of road transport records during 1991:

Cumbria Record Office, 140 Duke Street, Barrow-in-Furness LA14 1XW: North Lonsdale bridgemaster's book (1777).

Dundee District Archive & Record Centre, 14 City Square, Dundee DD1 3BY: Vehicle licensing registers for Angus (1903-74), Dundee (1904-81), Kinrossshire (1904-54), and Perthshire (1909-11).

Essex Record Office, Stanwell House, Stanwell Street, Colchester CO2 7DL: Alfred Walter Norfolk, carrier, Brightlingsea - financial records (1907-25).

Norfolk Record Office, Central Library, Bethel Street, Norwich NR2 1NJ: Eastern Counties Omnibus Co.Ltd, Norwich - minutes, financial and staff records (c.1890-1969).

West Yorkshire Archive Service, Registry of Deeds, Newstead Road, Wakefield WF1 2DE: Alfred Leng, coachbuilder, Pontefract - records (1889-1932).

Wigan Archives Service, Town Hall, Leigh WN7 2DY: Alfred Goulding Ltd, haulage contractor, Wigan - records (20th cent.).

ROAD TRANSPORT HISTORY RECORDS AT THE PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

By Tony Newman

The files of various Government Departments deposited at the Public Record Office at Kew contain much of interest to the Road Transport Historian. The primary reason for the documents surviving is that they 'can be considered as of legal, historical, genealogical or antiquarian use or interest, or give any important information not to be obtained elsewhere'.

Files are sent to the PRO by Government Departments for safekeeping, after a series of procedures have been followed to identify files likely to be suitable for permanent retention. In selecting which documents are to be preserved, the Inspecting Officers have to take account of the value of the documents to the Department in which they were created and, far more problematically, their value to future historians. They have generally taken the view that repetitive schedules are of no lasting interest, and much of the detailed and specific information has been destroyed. However, there are times when a specimen schedule or return has been preserved.

Some years ago I was in discussion with the Assistant Keeper at the PRO with a view to obtaining permission for a reputable body, such as the Omnibus Society, to be granted the opportunity to see files NOT selected for retention, before they were destroyed. Such discussions might be reopened.

It is necessary to appreciate the way in which responsibilities between Government Departments have changed over the years. For instance, before 1919 when the Ministry of Transport was formed, it was the Board of Trade that exercised a great deal of influence in transport matters.

The indexes to the files at the Public Record Office vary in format from one Government Department to another, but most have a Class Number (indicative of the Department) and a Piece Number (identifying the file or group of files). These indexes are virtually accession lists necessitating a full examination of the entire index in order to discover the items required.

Finding the interesting items takes a great deal of time and patience, firstly in working through the indexes to identify files which might possibly be of use, and secondly in reading through the files to extract the information. Files are requisitioned by the reader through a computer keyboard and, after an interval of some 30-40 minutes, the electronic pager supplied at each desk will indicate that the file is available at the counter. This waiting time may be utilised in scanning the indexes with a view to future research. Three files may be ordered initially and further files ordered as each file is returned. A photocopying service is available, which relieves the task of copying closely packed information by hand. A charge is made for this service.

My own interest does not extend to road building or road haulage matters, but in passing I have found plenty of evidence that files on these matters are to be found at the PRO.

Examples of Classes of Records which I have so far worked on are as follows. (The headings I have shown are not used officially, but are derived from my searches and indicate the general scope of the classes).

Board of Trade

BT 31 Company Files
BT 34 Liquidators' Files
BT 35 Commercial Department
BT 58 Tramway Bills
BT 65 Railway & Motor Services

Housing & Local Government

HLG 6 Tramway Improvements
HLG 7 World War II Emergency Plans
HLG 54 Local Omnibus Boards

Home Office

HO 45 Omnibuses & Trams
HO 192 World War II Air Raid Damage

Ministry of Labour

LAB 3 Tramways Tribunal 1924

Metropolitan Police

MEPO 1 Letter Books of Public Carriage Office
MEPO 2 London Buses
MEPO 4 London Bus Routes
MEPO 5 General Strike 1926

Ministry of Transport

MT 1 LPTB Arbitration Tribunals
MT 6 Tramways and Trolleybuses
MT 33 Passenger Transport Policy
MT 34 War Time Measures
MT 37 London Traffic Advisory Committees
MT 42 Legal Matters
MT 55 Technical and Production Matters
MT 56 Fares Policy
MT 80 London Fares
MT 84 Legal Dimensions and Alternative Fuels
MT 97 Passengers
MT 98 Technical Matters
MT 102 Bus & Coach Accidents
MT 114 Closed until 1997
MT 125 London Transport Bill

Ministry of Munitions

MUN 3 Mechanical Transport
MUN 4 Military Vehicles

Ministry of Supply

SUPP 3 World War II Contracts for Commercial Vehicles

War Office

WO 161 Military Mechanical Transport

The survival of the files in Classes BT 31 and BT 34 is worthy of particular note. The PRO Records Information Sheet No.94, entitled "Registration of Companies and Businesses", helps the researcher through the maze to discover what is likely to have survived in this group.

For practical purposes of research into road transport history, the Company Files for those companies formed between 1856 and 1930 probably form the most interesting group. This group will include companies formed under the Joint Stock Companies Act 1856 through to those which in 1950 became subject to destruction 20 years after dissolution.

Most Company files of companies which are dissolved end up by being destroyed. Only a very small proportion of files survive. The selection for survival has been largely random and amounts to only one file in a hundred passing to the Public Record Office, and, since 1950, only one in a hundred of those passing to the PRO remaining intact.

Because the files are passed to the PRO in batches, the indexes consist of more than twenty clumps of Company Registration Numbers. Each clump has to be scanned carefully until the eye lights upon a number known to relate to a Company File of interest. This will identify the Box Number needed to requisition the file for inspection. It is therefore essential to know the Company Registration Number before beginning a search, and it is economic in time to search the clumps for several files at a time. This work is so time consuming and so often negative in the end result that it is beneficial to record the outcome of any search made.

The main deposits of Company Files at the PRO are housed in the BT31 series of boxes, which are the Company Files themselves, while the BT34 series of boxes house the Liquidators' Files for the period 1890-1932.

The key to the company registration numbers is an ancient card index system, which is held not at the PRO, but at Companies House in the City Road, London; it is open to public access. In theory it contains the names and registration numbers of all companies dissolved before 1963. It is also said to contain information on whether a file has been destroyed or passed to the PRO and, if the latter, the Box Number should be stated. Unfortunately it is not totally reliable; some cards appear to be missing and others are not clearly marked.

Another class of records of potential interest to Road Transport historians is the Register of Business Names. Unfortunately, although a proportion of the files covering the years 1916-1981 has passed to the PRO and the files are listed by Registration Numbers, the key to those numbers appears to have been lost between Companies House and the PRO. Therefore, unless the searcher already knows the Registration Number of a Partnership or Sole Trader, further study of these records will be impossibly time-consuming unless by some miracle the index is found.

I have so far identified, and listed on computer, about 600 files relating to all forms of road transport that are potentially of interest to historians and I am adding to that number each time I wait for files to be produced. There are still many indexes that I have not even opened. I have inspected just over 400 files out of that 600 and a proportion of the remainder are closed under the '30-year rule'. Access to such files may, however, sometimes be granted to a researcher upon application to the Department concerned; I have successfully applied for a permit to look at certain Metropolitan Police Files. The subject matter of the extracts I have made so far is too varied to describe in this short paper, but it covers most aspects of passenger road transport, as will be gathered from the class headings listed above.

I would like to know if anyone else has been working in a similar manner. It would be useful to compare notes and to work out ways in which to tackle the remainder. Eventually I would like to see a Road Transport Historian's Guide to the Records at the PRO.

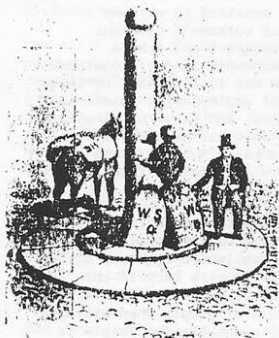
The PRO is located in Ruskin Avenue, Kew; Kew Gardens (District Line) station is about ten minutes walk away. It is open on Monday to Friday 9.30 am to 5.00 pm. It is closed on the usual Bank Holidays and Public Holidays and also for stocktaking, usually for two weeks in October. Readers' Tickets are issued on proof of identity and a brief statement of the nature of the intended research. All notes must be taken in pencil.

THE PACK HORSE IN THE DONCASTER AREA: A FEW NOTES

By P.L.Scowcroft

Although carts were known well back in the Middle Ages (I have traced mention of them in the tolls of Doncaster's new bridge over the Don in 1248), because of the state of contemporary roads most goods transport depended on access to navigable water or on pack horses. The latter brought to Doncaster salt from Cheshire over the Woodhead route, charcoal for the South Yorkshire iron industry and much else, including goods for sale in Doncaster's market, prosperous from medieval times onwards. Until after 1700 pack horses took Sheffield iron and steel manufactured goods and Derbyshire lead and millstones to their outlet on the River Idle at Bawtry. Inns served the pack horses and those who attended them as they later did stage coaches, stage waggons and even some horse buses; the tiny village of Pilsley, near Baslow in the Peak District, had five inns at one time on account of the village being a convenient staging point for pack horses on the route between the Derbyshire lead mines and the port of Bawtry. It is no accident that several pack horse bridges survive in North Derbyshire or did so until comparatively recently.

In Doncaster the pack horse was still paramount for goods transport in 1695. Abraham Pilling, who died later that year, was the town's leading carrier. On his death he was found to own sixteen pack horses (a rather modest number, it may be thought) but no carts; the use of the latter in the town was local and in fair weather only. In the first half of the new century, the development of the Dun Navigation (1726-7 onwards) and stage waggon services (from 1743) afforded goods traffic more attractive options which remained until the railway reached Doncaster in 1848-9. Long distance waggon services locally reached their peak in 1815-35 and the Navigation remains open to this day, though it carries little merchandise.



But pack horses nevertheless remained in use as the illustration alongside suggests. This shows Doncaster's Wheat Cross (in the Corn Market), which dated back centuries and was to disappear in the town's mid 19th century market reorganisations, and a pack horse which has apparently just discharged what looks like a couple of sacks of corn. The dress of the two men looks like the very early 19th century. The engraving appears to indicate that pack horses remained useful at least to local farmers in getting their goods to market. Soon after 1800 improved carts and waggons, the establishment of turnpike trusts on local major roads, and the appearance of effective roadmaking techniques were to make the pack horse a thing of the past.

**'STATE WHETHER MECHANIC, ARTISAN OR LABOURER':
WORKMEN'S FARES ON TRAMS AND BUSES**

The following is a summary of an interesting series of correspondence which has been running in the Transport Ticket Society's Journal on the subject of workmen's tickets. Under the Tramways Act, 1870, and numerous Acts for individual tramway companies or municipal tramways, there was imposed a statutory obligation to provide workmen's cars. These requirements normally stated that the provision of the workmen's cars or facilities was intended for 'artisans, mechanics or daily labourers'. Initially -- and certainly into the first decade of this century -- many tramway undertakings literally ran 'workmen's cars'. But this caused increasing problems. Clerks, lady typewriters and shop assistants, for example, sought to use the return workmen's cars, operating in the evening, even if not the early morning ones, because of their low fares. Policy varied widely between operators (or municipalities) as to whether all comers who rode on the cars -- or, alternatively, all who rode before a particular hour in the morning -- should be carried at workmen's fares, or whether those who attempted to do so should be required to prove their *bona fides* as 'artisans, mechanics and daily labourers'. This led, of course, to disputes as to what employments, trades, professions or vocations fell within the meaning of the phrase.

This appears to have become a particular issue from 1907, following the election of increasing numbers of Labour municipal councillors, who, together with Trades Councils, campaigned for extensions of workmen's fare facilities. It was in that year, for example, that Wolverhampton Corporation abandoned workmen's cars and their cheap single fares and, instead, issued workmen's return tickets to all comers on all cars up to 7.30am. Most operators, sooner or later, adopted a similar practice and subsequently extended it to their bus services.

However, there remained a few who, certainly well into the 1930s, maintained systems of identification of persons entitled to workmen's fares. In 1927 Burnley Corporation ordained that workmen's discount tickets would only be sold to artisans, daily labourers and others required to contribute to the National Health Insurance Scheme, together with articulated pupils and apprentices; employees not identifiable by their clothing or uniform had to carry a certificate of employment. Maidstone Corporation issued oval passes -- at first of bone, and later of aluminium for workmen and brass for workwomen -- to those that had proved their status. Lytham St Anne's Corporation issued a *Workman's Certificate for Reduced Fares*, which entitled the holder to travel at reduced fare up to 9am, between 12 noon and 2pm, and between 5pm and 7pm.

In 1945 our Chairman, John Hibbs, was issued by the Eastern National Omnibus Company with a *Night Work and Sunday Travel Certificate*. At that time, in order to conserve fuel, a Defence Regulation required all normal bus services to be timed so that the vehicles were back in the depot by 10pm and no Sunday service commenced before midday. (Another regulation governed priorities for certain classes of people when boarding buses at peak periods.) However, it was clearly necessary for people in certain kinds of employment to travel at 'prohibited' hours, and not all of this traffic could conveniently be carried by contract services. In this case, it was necessary for workers to reach factories in Colchester (notably Davey Paxmans) for the night and Sunday shifts. Eastern National

therefore operated a number of services for this purpose, which could only be used by people holding this permit. For reasons which are not apparent, the certificate requires the holder to 'state whether mechanic, artisan or labourer'. (John was at that time working as a porter at Essex County Hospital and declared himself as a labourer.) However, Eastern National was not a company with any tramway origins, so it is not clear why it should have tied itself to limitations that were of tramway origin.

Workmen's services and fares originated on the railways. They operated mainly in the London area, but also to a more limited extent in the other principal cities and in mining areas. The first statutory requirement to provide workmen's trains was in the London, Chatham & Dover Railway Act 1864, but some railways had provided cheap fares or trains much earlier. The first example was possibly the North Woolwich Railway, which provided cheap fares on its railway and ferry for workmen at Woolwich Dockyard from 1847. For further information the following sources are recommended: Charles E. Lee, *Passenger Class Distinctions* (1946); H.J. Dyos, 'Workmen's Fares in South London, 1860-1914' (*Journal of Transport History* vol.1 (1953-4)); John R. Kellest, *Railways and Victorian Cities* (1969); and Jack Simmons, *The Railway in Town and Country 1830-1914* (1986).

Kellest (p.97) has found evidence of two prosecutions by the London, Chatham & Dover Railway Company for travelling on a workmen's ticket without being an artisan, mechanic or daily labourer. Were there any similar prosecutions by tramway undertakings?

HISTORICAL LISTING OF PSV OPERATORS

The late J.C.H. (Cecil) Smithies, whose interest in buses dated back to his schooldays in the 1920s, devoted himself to the comprehensive listing of motorbus operators in the UK. His researches are contained in two sets of listings.

The first is a list of companies that included bus transport in their proposed interests, which were registered between 1920 and 1963. It comprises 3,000 entries (very approximately) in alphabetical order and quotes the company number, its date of registration, its registered office, and the original directors. It is useful for identifying the registered numbers of bus companies (eg for the purpose described in Tony Newman's article above). It is now held by Roger Atkinson, who is willing to answer queries (address on page 1).

The second is a much longer list, running to around 30,000 names, which also includes private businesses. While there was a strong element in it of personal observation by Cecil and several fellow enthusiasts, the bulk of his information came from printed and published sources, financial news, registers of defunct companies, yearbooks, directories, timetables, etc., a method of collection with some obvious limitations.

The work came to a halt in the early 1960s, probably as a result of Cecil's failing eyesight, and the list, after suffering water damage, was destroyed. Fortunately he had forwarded carbon copies of all the 2,200 sheets to a fellow enthusiast and, after the latter's death, these were discovered and carefully recopied.

The Provincial Historical Research Group of the Omnibus Society intends to amplify this list, keeping approximately to its existing 'cut-off' date, by relying on the local knowledge of its members to add to it, going back to the earliest days of the motorbus, and including those whose existence was brief, with others who managed to remain hidden from the gaze of outsiders.

To facilitate this, the original list has been broken down into counties, with volunteers sought for each one. Not all counties have been covered (eg none in Scotland and very few in Wales), so offers of help in any form would be welcome. The coordinator of this major undertaking is Mr S.A.Staddon, 3 Leominster Road, Sunderland SR2 9HG, who will be pleased to provide additional information.

[John Dunabin]

From The Times, June 27, 1825, reprinted from the Leeds Mercury

"On Friday, before the magistrates at the Court-house in this place, Mr. Thomas Pearson, the driver and part proprietor of the *Knaresborough Union Coach*, was fined in the mitigated penalty of £70 and costs, for having carried 19 outside passengers, instead of 12, the latter being the number for which his coach is licensed. At the same-time, James Blayds, the driver of the *Ripon Retaliator Coach*, was fined in the mitigated penalty of £10 and costs, for carrying two passengers more than his complement. These convictions are under the statute of 53 Geo.III, cap.48, by which it is enacted, that one-half of the penalty shall go to the informer, and the other moiety to the trustees of the road on which the offence is committed."

The purpose of the statute under which the prosecutions were made was to reduce the large number of coach accidents caused by over-loading. Both the driver and proprietor were liable to standard penalties of £5 per excess passenger. Pearson was fined in both capacities. The years 1825-7 appear to have produced a peak of prosecutions as a result of the activities of a roving professional informer called Byers. [See Harry Hanson, *The Coaching Life* (1983) pp.131-3; John Copeland, *Roads and their Traffic 1750-1850* (1968) pp.86-7.]

Road Transport Before the Railways: Russell's London Flying Waggon, by Dorian Gerhold. Cambridge University Press, 1993. pp.xvii,316. 19 illns, 5 figs, 6 maps, 24 tables. £35. ISBN 0-521-41950-6.

This book by one of the speakers at the first R&RTHC seminar in 1991 (see Newsletter no.1), is much the most detailed account so far of the early road haulage industry. It is the history of one firm, which became the principal carrier between the West Country and London, and one of the largest in England. From 1768 to 1843 it operated under the name of successive generations of the Russell family. However, it can be traced further back: certainly to 1673, probably to the 1630s, and possibly much earlier. (A national system for carrying cloth from the West Country and other wool-growing regions for export through the port of London had probably been established by the late 14th or early 15th century.) Russell's main service ran between Exeter and London, with connecting services from Plymouth and Falmouth. Local carriers provided feeder services at towns along the route. Its role changed dramatically as the railway network extended, but its rump survived until the nationalisation of road transport at the end of 1947. The continuity of the industry, in this case through more than 300 years, is one of the surprises to emerge.

Through the history of this firm the book sheds much new light on the process of development in long-distance carrying generally. In the late 17th century, Russell's predecessor, Thomas Morris, operated a weekly packhorse service between Exeter and London. Waggoners were introduced about 1712, but did not totally replace the packhorses until 1739, since packhorse transport was faster, although more expensive. Following the legislation of the 1750s and the widening of roads to accommodate them, 'broad wheeled' waggons, hauled by a team of eight horses, were introduced and by 1760 the firm was providing a daily service from Exeter to London. By 1764 it had become a 'flying waggon' service, reducing the journey time from 6 or 7 days to $4\frac{1}{2}$; the flying waggons travelled no faster (about 2 mph), but ran continuously day and night, changing teams and waggoners at intervals. They were very reliable -- delays longer than a few hours were rare, even in winter unless there was heavy snow -- and losses and damage of goods was not a significant problem.

Between the late 17th and early 19th centuries the productivity of the West Country's London carriers approximately doubled; their costs (of which more than half was horse provender) fell by 30-50% in real terms. The three reasons were better roads (particularly the easing of steep gradients by the turnpikes), better-bred horses, and larger, more efficient firms (the nine West Country London carriers in 1720 had become three by 1800).

In the 19th century the road network was sufficiently improved to make it possible to carry the same loads in lighter waggons drawn by smaller teams. Carriers' prices fell by a further 20-30%. To meet the demand for faster transits for perishable and urgent goods, Russells introduced in 1821 a complementary daily service of 'fly vans'. These were smaller vehicles, hauled by a team of four at a speed of about 6 mph, and covered the journey in 36 hours. However they were not a great commercial success and were withdrawn after 10 years.

In spite of the steady reduction in real road prices, they remained very high compared with coastal shipping (by a factor of 4 or more), but the latter was slow, infrequent and unreliable until the advent of steam ships in the 1820s (although the effective difference in price was much less when goods had to be carried by road from inland towns to the nearest port.) The waggons therefore carried the higher value and urgent goods that could bear the higher charges. The overall tonnage carried by road was quite small; the payload of a waggon was only about 5 tons. However, the author argues that the economic significance of the long-distance carriers should not be measured by comparison with water, and later rail, transport. Rather, they should be judged on the role they played in overcoming the 'obstacle of distance' on routes, and for traffics, not well served by coastal and inland navigation. 'It is their contribution to creating and maintaining a national market over many centuries and in promoting the growth of London and the diffusion of London's influence, with all the vast ramifications stemming from that, that [their] importance ... is to be found.' This was a process that occurred uniquely early in England.

During the past twenty years it has been recognised that earlier historians were mistaken in believing that there was little regular long-distance transport of goods by road, because of high costs and the poor state of the roads. This major study considerably extends our understanding of the importance of the long-distance carriers. The publishers are to be commended on their quality of production, giving one the feeling that one has got value for the book's relatively high price.

[GAB]



A broad-wheeled waggon (above) and a fly van (below) from bill heads of Thomas Russell & Co. Note the bow shaped springs under the body of the van and the extra height they gave to the vehicle; also the positions of the driver and guard, who had to travel on the van because of its higher speed. (Reproduced from illustrations in the book)



A paper on 'Packhorses and wheeled vehicles in England, 1550-1800' by Dorian Gerhold has been published in the *Journal of Transport History* vol.14 no.1 (March 1993) pp.1-26.