
ROADS & ROAD TRANSPORT HISTORY CONFERENCE

NEWSLETTER no. 7 January 1995

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CONFERENCE NEWS

Hon. Secretary's Report for 1994

Membership at the end of the year was 12 Corporate and 32 Associate Members. We were pleased to welcome during the year the M&D and East Kent Bus Club as a Corporate Member, Professor John Armstrong as an Honorary Associate, and eight new Associate Members.

Professor Theo Barker, one of the driving forces behind the creation of the Conference, had a triple by-pass operation during the year but I am pleased to report that he has fully recovered and is as busy as ever again. In the circumstances he did not feel able to accept our offer to appoint him as President of the Conference.

The Conference met twice during the year, in January and September, both times at the Museum of British Road Transport in Coventry. We continue to enjoy the excellent facilities there and are grateful to Barry Littlewood, the Managing Director, for his continued support. The AGM was held at the January meeting when all the officers were re-appointed. An innovation at the September meeting was that, after holding the business meeting in the morning, we devoted the afternoon to a series of presentations by members, both Corporate and Associate. Arthur Ingram spoke on 'Setting up a new private transport museum in a disused pumping station'; Tony Newman on 'Sources of road transport history at the Public Record Office'; and Ron Phillips on 'Early municipal bus operations in Widnes' (a slightly shortened version appears on a later page). Finally, Steve Bagley gave a fascinating practical demonstration of the Museum of British Road Transport's computer-based photograph cataloguing system (see page 3).

The increasing attendance at these meetings by Associate Members is very welcome and we look forward to more joining in 1995.

A new membership prospectus leaflet has been produced. Please pass the enclosed copy on to a friend who shares our interests. More copies are available from the Hon. Secretary on request. An aim is to forge links with some of the smaller specialist societies in our field.

There was no Symposium in 1994 but plans are well advanced for the 1995 event (see below).

Next Meeting

This will again be held at the Museum of British Road Transport, Coventry, on Saturday 11 February. Following the business meeting in the morning, the afternoon will be devoted to a presentation of the Historical Model Railway Society's *Photocat* system for indexing photographs plus one or two short papers by members.

1995 Symposium at Beaulieu

Note the date in your new diaries: Saturday 14 October 1995 at the National Motor Museum, Beaulieu, Hampshire. The theme will be 'The Passenger Road Transport Industry'. Further details and booking forms will be sent out nearer the time.

New Members

Welcome to the following new associate members. Their declared special interests are shown in brackets.

Roy P. S. Bevin, 4 Orchard Close, Mickleton, Chipping Campden, Glos. GL55 6TA. [Road passenger transport.]

Richard E. McLeish, 6 Windmill Rise, Holgate, York YO2 4TX.

Terry Strange, 2 Grasmere Gardens, New Milton, Hampshire BH25 5HZ. [Transport planning and history; modern and historic motor vehicles.]

K. W. Swallow JP, 1 Cinder Lane, Liverpool L18 2HD.

CORRESPONDENCE

A Losing Battle?

What if anything can be done about the seemingly endless flow of misleading and even completely erroneous information appearing in print about the early days of motorbus services? Statements about railway origins are not immune from this — I read one recently giving the first railway in England as the one between Liverpool and Manchester — but at least, ignoring the years before mechanical traction arrived, there is some general awareness of the nature of steam motive power.

When it comes to motorbus services, particularly those in rural areas, it seems almost an involuntary reaction of the reminiscence industry to state that Mr X began with a box on wheels or even something cruder, possibly carrying mixed loads of humans and animals. Some pioneers did, but of course there were properly built buses running in many places even before World War I. And when it comes to starting dates, it seems to be far from uncommon to lose a decade, referring to beginnings in the 1930s, as if these were the dark ages.

I think the answer to my original question is nothing. Furthermore I suspect that disinformation is winning the battle; just look on the shelves of your local bookshop.

John Dunabin

Omnibus Society Library and Archive at Coalbrookdale

The opening times are 9.30 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays in each month, not as stated in Newsletter no. 6.

NOTES FROM IAN YEARSLEY, RESEARCH COORDINATOR

Queuing for Buses

MPs have been asked to do away with a little known clause in the 1937 London Transport Passengers Act which gave bus and Underground inspectors sweeping powers to force commuters into a line, no more than two abreast, and despatch queue-jumpers to the courts to face fines of up to £2. The obscure bylaw is being repealed because it has never been used and is regarded as superfluous. The queue, perhaps the nation's most civilised and restrained institution, is so well established it does not require compulsion.

Thanks to Roy Bevin for the cutting from the *Daily Telegraph* of 21 September 1994, from which the above is extracted. The statutory status of bus queues was previously discussed in Newsletters nos. 2 and 4.

Computer Aids to Historical Research

As more and more computer systems and software emerge to help the historical researcher, the Roads & Road Transport History Conference has a special role to play in making developments known and in encouraging compatibility of systems.

In September the R&RTHC business meeting heard a brief report on the computer-based cataloguing system for railway photographs just launched by the Historical Model Railway Society and that society's project for a documentation centre within the Midland Railway Trust premises at Butterley. The computer system, known as *PhotoCat*, is designed to allow historians without computer skills to

feed information into it and can be extended to cover all kinds of road vehicles, from tramcars to traction engines. Peter Stevens of the HMRS has accepted an invitation to speak at the next R&RTHC business meeting on 11 February.

Also at the September meeting, Steve Bagley of the Museum of British Road Transport demonstrated the museum's own computer-based cataloguing system, designed for manufacturers' photographs. They have, for instance, 70,000 negatives from one motor manufacturer and 4,000 from another. (Although cars predominate, there are many of commercial vehicles too.) He demonstrated how their computer listings are linked with a Sony CRV system, basically a computer-controlled video player. This takes outsize discs, about one foot square. Large numbers of the museum's negatives have been recorded on videotape for reference, so that the negatives need only be handled when prints are actually needed.

Transferring negatives to digital record is now technically possible, but the Museum is not convinced that this is the way ahead at present, but it may be in the future. The video images can be printed out, but quality is poor by comparison with prints off negatives. However, as a means of reference it is ideal, enabling the researcher to run quickly through up to 70,000 pictures on one disc without the need to handle prints or negatives. An interesting feature is that they video-record negatives, not prints, and make the reversal to produce positive images in the video process.

Tramway Museum Society member Ian Souter, in Scotland, is developing a

database of opening and closing of tramway systems in Britain, European countries, North and South America and elsewhere, related to various factors such as population of cities, industrial activity, and unemployment. It would be interesting to hear of any similar ventures in progress, whether for trams, buses or any other aspect of road transport.

Query: William Lees, Ltd

I have been asked to suggest sources of information on a bus operator William Lees, Ltd of Radcliffe, Lancashire, whose undertaking was bought out in 1930 jointly by Lancashire United Transport & Power Company and Bury Corporation Transport. Can anyone help?

EARLY MUNICIPAL BUS OPERATION IN WIDNES

By Ron Phillips

The present day Halton Borough Transport Limited at Widnes (formerly Widnes Corporation Omnibus Department) has operated since 1923 from premises at Moor Lane, Widnes. When I was given permission recently to examine records, I found documents going back to before the above date, and many relating to the 1930s, and almost a complete set of records of the 1945-70 period available for scrutiny. These have proved an invaluable resource in revealing hitherto unknown facts on the history of the Widnes transport undertaking, and much concerning the way in which a small to medium sized municipal undertaking worked. Widnes does have its unusual facets, too: the omnibus department was controlled by the Bridge & Omnibus Committee, which also operated one of the three public transporter bridges in Great Britain; it was the first place in the world to operate a fleet of top-covered double-decked buses (from 1909); its early management structure is believed to be unique; and (an unusual distinction) during the Second World War it was able to hire better buses than its own in the shape of five year old Leyland bodied TD4c vehicles, inter alia, from Bolton Corporation, when many operators

had to make use of obsolescent cast-offs of unreliable makes.

The record of the 1914-18 period shows the wartime problems of an earlier generation of buses: the vehicles were unreliable (sometimes a crew would use three buses in one shift); the revenue was much reduced by the issue of Workmen's tickets, but it was boosted by the provision of recreational services on Sundays when revenue per bus mile was the best of the week; and the Superintendent (there was no 'Manager' at this time, although there was a slightly superior post of 'Engineer') sold tickets himself on some occasions, especially on early shifts (5 a.m.). The Daily Traffic Returns, models of book-keeping as practised in post-Edwardian Britain, show which buses were used and who staffed them every day, what the weather was like, and what values of tickets were issued. They also reveal interesting facts of life in the First World War: the greatest number of passengers was carried on Saturdays, many using Workmen's tickets before 8 a.m.; Bank Holidays were a sure revenue booster even in a small industrial town; petrol shortage only caused the service to be suspended once, although the price of petrol became

high; and the service of buses was suspended for a second time on Monday 11 November 1918 from 11 a.m., marking the end of the First World War. The next day was a public holiday and the buses worked normally, earning higher than average revenue. (History repeated itself in 1945, when the bus crews were publicly praised for turning out in full on VE Day and the day following.) I am aware of the fact that VE Day was organised in advance by the politicians, but does anyone know how 11.11.18 was set up? The workers of Widnes bought their WR tickets as usual that morning, but they must have walked home.

Almost everything in the Widnes archive is of interest: the Petty Cash Book of 1959, written in ball-point and by a feminine hand, but countersigned by the General Manager, now has a period charm, with its references to the purchase of long forgotten products (Mansion Polish, Rinso), of unusual items (gloves and a brief case, plaster for the canteen wall) and of 200 cigarettes for the Road Safety Awards. It would seem that I shall be some time working through this rich mine of material and that, when the work is done, it would be appropriate to recommend that certain items be lodged with a suitable archive.

MAKING ENDS MEET

By John Dunabin

After many years of studying the activities of small rural bus operators between the wars, I have come to realise that within my knowledge two important questions remain unanswered, or only partly so. Perhaps it was a matter of failing or not daring to ask the right questions; perhaps the answers were never known or had been carefully forgotten. One is how the busmen ever made their activities pay; the other is how the majority of their passengers could ever afford the fares they charged. Can it all be explained by one or both of two concepts then unknown: marginal costing and cross subsidisation?

The cheapest lightweight bus, bought new, cost several hundred pounds, but after a few years use its resale price might only be £50 or less; many worn out ones were just left in a field to rot. What about running expenses and income? The former were low, fortunately, but so too was the latter. The owner, when there was only one bus, was usually the driver, drawing no wages;

the conductor/conductress, often his wife, was similarly unrewarded, merely gaining a free shopping trip to town. If a driver was employed, usually part-time, his wage may have been as little as £1 per week. Then came petrol and tyres, the former cheap; the latter, life limited by untarred roads, could be expensive, so they were often worn to near danger point, or even, disastrously, beyond.

Turning to income, I have in mind one 14-seater bus which ran past our door twice weekly into town as part of its routine. On Mondays, Thursdays, and Sundays, takings from passengers, apart from very infrequent private hires, were nil. On Wednesdays, for a round trip through very hilly country of nearly 40 miles, total income was between £1 and £2, and on Fridays probably less. Saturday was a repeat of Wednesday, but with the addition of an evening 'pictures' trip to another town. Tuesday was the big day, with two market journeys, but total takings

were probably no more than £3, adding up to no more than £8 for a normal week. The justification for my question should be obvious.

The answer must surely lie in other profit-making activities. Many of the busmen were additionally smallholders, hauliers, part-time farmers, garage proprietors, innkeepers, etc. It seems obvious that entry into almost any form of business activity is easier for somebody already in business, but in the case being studied here, or rather touched on, the important question is: which came first? Did successful or even unsuccessful small businessmen move into bus operation, thinking it would be profitable, or was the sequence reversed, with other activities, less congenial but more lucrative, being added to bus operation?

Mr Gwynne Jorden of Upper Llangunock in Herefordshire, a bus driver, possibly with parental assistance — father owned a threshing machine — bought his employer's business and moved to better-sited premises on the A49 road near Ross-on-Wye. Here he offered petrol, all motor repairs, bed and breakfast, teas, and refreshments. Horses for riding followed later. Mr S. Cross, of Lexden near Colchester, it seems moved in the opposite direction. His published timetable for 'The LEXDEN BUS' showed a service which could hardly have been a money spinner, with 4 (daily it is assumed) return journeys between Lexden and Dial Church in Colchester, plus one short working, and an end to end fare of 3d. However, it also included the following statement:

S. Cross respectfully appeals to the public to assist him in Establishing the above 'Bus Service by using it; and further favouring him with Orders for Prime Cod Fish, which he continues to

receive from Harwich Deep Sea Fishery. Present Prices for which are:- Whole Fish, 3½d per pound. Tail End, 5d per pound. Middle Cut 6d per lb. Oysters, selected, 1/- per doz. Seconds 1/- per score. Orders received on the 'Bus and at Lexden St.

[All the figures quoted refer, of course, to 'old' money. To convert them to fancied present day equivalents, as is so often done, is completely meaningless.]

This was almost certainly a horse bus service, running along Lexden Street before the Colchester Corporation tram service commenced in 1904. These are just two examples I have ready to hand; there must be many more. Is there not a case for a systematic study of this aspect of rural bus operation?

As regards my second question I find myself at an even greater loss. Much has been written in nostalgic vein about vanished rural England — urban England too — but most of it appears to me to be strongly politically biased. On the one hand, life say 75 to 100 years ago is presented as prolonged misery, with wages below subsistence level and no mention of the cost of living; on the other as a prolonged rural idyll, with beer at twopence halfpenny a pint and other essentials equally cheap. Moving nearer to the present time, most popular writers, regardless of their political orientation, seem to think it was a golden age for public travel, with the ubiquitous railways meeting all needs. The reality was that, even when it met their needs geographically, railway travel was far too expensive for most rural dwellers; distances were great and disposable incomes — the adjective is important — were extremely low.

From my home on the Welsh border the return fare to Hereford was 2/6d, while over the mountain people from Capel-fffin had to pay 3 shillings for the shorter trip to Abergavenny and back, prohibitively expensive for many people. Who then used the buses? The answer as I saw it was farmers' wives. To provide themselves with a little pocket money they kept hens, possibly grew a few vegetables, also making butter and cheese from surplus milk. Most farms too had a few fruit trees.

But how much produce could one woman take to market, and how much money did it yield? Eggs at times sold for no more than coppers a dozen, butter was unlikely to make a shilling per pound, and in a year of plenty I remember the price of damsons falling to one-halfpenny per pound. Even if all was carried free — unlike the larger

companies the market buses rarely charged for accompanied 'parcels', however weighty — one can wonder if purses were much if any heavier — the day out of course gave the opportunity for some careful shopping — when their owners returned home than when they set out. Why did they do it? But I almost forgot. One day of the year was different. After staying up all night 'feathering' (actually de-feathering), a special bus left at between 5 and 6 o'clock in the morning, loaded with dressed chickens, and their owners, for the Christmas market. This must have been the most profitable trip of the year, for the busman and his passengers.

Acknowledgements: For information about 'The Lexden Bus' I am indebted to Messrs R. N. Collins and T. A. G. Dendy.

AREA AGREEMENTS

By John Dunabin

In the years immediately following World War I there was already a substantial number of bus companies firmly based, most of them centred on large towns or cities, with a few routes radiating therefrom. They did not cover the whole country, however, and there were hundreds of others, soon mounting to thousands, filling the spaces in between. Expansion by the stronger ones, either as a result of acquisitions or more usually aggressive competition, was natural and inevitable. BMMC ('Midland Red'), already one of the strongest, established secondary centres very early in Hereford and Shrewsbury, with services fanning out from there.

Less than a decade later, the major companies, now much larger, covered most of the country, linking up with each other

but with little overlap, each having its own 'territory', a fact recognised by the newly-appointed Traffic Commissioners, whose terms of reference included the limitation of wasteful competition. There was in fact a detectable bias in some of their early decisions towards the regional companies and against the independents, a word loosely describing the smaller operators.

This relatively orderly situation had not come about by chance. Quite early, before the coming dominance of the motorbus in public transport could be generally foreseen, the handicap to its development of unrestricted competition was realised. Walter Flexman French, whose view of the future helped to create major companies such as East Kent Road Car, Maidstone & District, Southdown, and Hants & Dorset,

which could have trodden on each others toes, and S. E. Garcke of BET, saw the need for formal arrangements to prevent or at least limit this. Area agreements were drawn up and signed by most of the major companies, including it is believed all those associated with BET, Thomas Tilling, and of course Tilling and British Automobile Traction Co. Later, either as they were absorbed into one or other of the major groups or, as recognition of their territorial strengths, other companies joined in, but coverage was never complete.

Such agreements had undoubted benefits for travellers as well as shareholders. It has been said that they led to poor service provision at or near area boundaries, but that is to imply that the independent operators served the public less well, which was not always so. They did lead to the creation of 'frontier towns' such as Aylesbury, Carlisle, Doncaster, and Warrington, giving rise to minor difficulties; elsewhere joint services could cross boundaries.

What though was to be the effect of passage of the Road Traffic Act of 1930 on what would now be seen as a 'restraint of trade'? It should be added that there were many understandings, some even involving exchanges of routes, between major companies and entrenched independents, some covered by exchanges of letters but some less formal. Were the joint area agreements between the railway companies and municipalities — Halifax, Huddersfield and Sheffield in 1929 and Todmorden in 1931 — ever part of the scheme? And what was the position if any of the small number of statutory companies, such as the Gosport & Fareham Omnibus Co. and Mansfield District Traction Co., with unlimited liabilities and as such needing protection,

even absolute protection? It would seem that they were all allowed to continue, without any public exposure, even surviving in substance the formation of the National Bus Company, until deregulation.

Interest in the question has been stimulated by a recent discovery. When, as the result of sale to the BTC by several independents in the north-east of England — ABC of Ferryhill, Darlington Triumph, and Express of Durham — it was believed that creation of the BTC-owned Durham District Services Ltd was a means of circumventing an existing agreement between Northern General Transport, still BET-controlled, and United Automobile Services (the first two at least appeared to cross the boundary between them). Recent examination however of 'United' records, now deposited in Durham County Record Office, has revealed that the agreement was abrogated in 1934, presumably because it was regarded as redundant.*

When did such agreements, which had so much to do with shaping the bus industry, cease to have force, in law or in reality? With the release of so many of the records of former NBC companies, it should be possible to throw some light on this subject, which has many facets untouched on here.

As a footnote, when in c. 1960 North Western Road Car staff, without prior reference, erected a stop sign for the joint Liverpool-Newcastle service in Warrington, this irritated Lancashire United staff at the operating level — 'It's in our area' — not lessened by the fact that through ignorance on the part of the North Western men, coming from Stockport (?), it was wrongly placed for half of the eastbound departures.

* Private communication from Mr S. A. Staddon.

MORE ABOUT PACK-HORSES IN DONCASTER

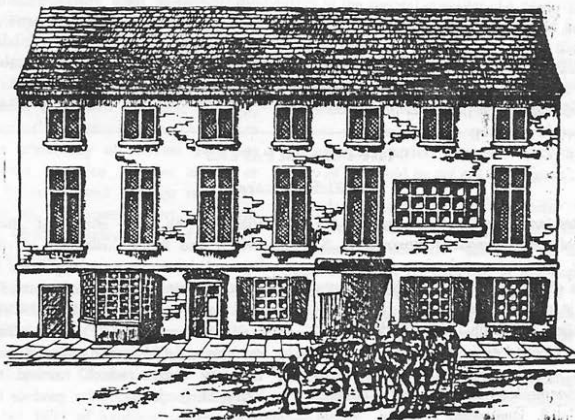
By Philip L. Scowcroft

As a footnote to my notes on *The Pack Horse in the Doncaster Area*¹, it is worth recalling that there was once a Pack Horse Inn on the west side of (Lower) Frenchgate, Doncaster, which was formerly part of the town's north-south thoroughfare. The inn dated at least from the early 17th century and, as the name suggests, was heavily involved in the pack-horse traffic, a traffic enhanced of course by Doncaster's position, important since Roman times, at the intersection of north-south and east-west communications. At the rear of the inn was a gallery extending along the attic storey, used as bedrooms for the packhorsemen, and communicating directly with the courtyard below by external stairs. In this way late arrivals and early departures would not disturb the rest of the inn too much.

A few of the innkeepers' names are known: in 1778 a Mr Hancock, in 1785 his daughter, Mrs Arthur. At this latter date pack-horses still used their eponymous inn but, with the development of stage-waggon services by that time,² the longer-distance pack-horse 'runs' were in decline. Soon afterwards the inn was re-named the George and Dragon and was eventually demolished in 1842. Its licence was transferred to a house in nearby Marshgate, rebuilt (still known as the George and Dragon) in 1906 and finally demolished in the summer of 1956.

1 Newsletter no. 4 (July 1993) p. 11.

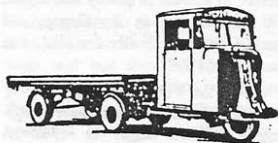
2 The earliest known Doncaster stage-waggon service began in 1743. A slightly later one ironically used the (still standing) Woolpack Inn in the Market Place.



The Pack Horse Inn, Lower Frenchgate, Doncaster, as it appeared in the late 18th century

MECHANICAL HORSE CLUB

The Club was formed in 1983 to promote the preservation and restoration of mechanical horses; to encourage research into the history of their production and operation; to collect records, models and photographs; and to organise displays at public events. It produces a bi-monthly Newsletter and has around 70 members — 'big enough to get things done, small enough to know and help each other'.



This information is taken from *The Mechanical Horse* by Bill Aldridge, a short history of the technical development of this vehicle type long associated with the railways.

The Karrier Cob of 1930 and the Scammell Mechanical Horse of 1933 were specifically designed, in conjunction with

the LMSR and LNER respectively, to meet the railways' need for a low-cost, highly-maneuvrable motor vehicle for collection and delivery of goods and parcels in congested narrow streets and at premises designed for access by horse and cart. The railway companies were always the biggest users but, as the selection of illustrations shows, mechanical horses served a variety of functions for a wide range of other users, civilian and military, at home and abroad.

BR bought 7,500 of the 13,000 post-war Scarab design (= Scammell + Arab, a cross between the best breeds of lorry and horse). Production ceased in 1967, partly through technical obsolescence and partly because of the contraction of BR's goods services.

The booklet has 36 pages, with 50 illustrations. It is available at £3.50 including postage from the Mechanical Horse Club's Secretary, G. A. Arnold, 23 Parkhouse Road, Lower Pilsley, Chesterfield S45 8DG, to whom membership enquiries should also be addressed.

GAB

THE DUNBAR PAPERS

By Richard Storey

The attendance, and participation, of the doyen of road transport historians, C. S. Dunbar, was one of the memorable features of the first R&RTHC Symposium held at what was then Coventry Polytechnic in March 1991. Charles Stuart Dunbar (1900-1992) was both a road haulage operator (Red Arrow Deliveries Ltd, Birmingham) and a road transport writer and consultant. To a whole generation of enthusiasts his name was

familiar as the first editor of *Buses Illustrated* and future historians of road haulage will have cause to be grateful for the outstanding work of his later years, *The rise of road transport 1919-1939* (Ian Allan, 1981; hereafter *RRT*). This is both an insider's and a historian's view of some of the key events which marked the evolution of goods traffic by road in the inter-war years.

As a man of both action and reflection, Dunbar carefully kept a significant quantity of papers relevant to the history of road haulage, deriving from his own career, and bequeathed them to the Modern Records Centre of the University of Warwick. They were first put at the disposal of the Road Haulage Association for consultation by their historian, Mr L. Harper MBE, who kindly transferred them to the Centre in December 1994. In the Modern Records Centre the Dunbar Papers fit into a context of relevant collections which includes some records of the RHA itself, papers of the late Ralph Cropper, records of a number of Transport Development Group constituents, extensive records of the Transport & General Workers' Union, including some relevant to road haulage industrial relations, and minutes of the commercial vehicle manufacturer, AEC.

The present writer has already begun work on the arrangement and listing of the Dunbar Papers, which fall broadly into two main series: correspondence and minutes of the National Conference of Express Carriers and its predecessor, the National Conference of Parcels Carriers, 1937-42, and Dunbar's reference files. This series consists principally of articles from the trade press, but also contains unique or scarce items of road haulage relevance, such as an investment report on Ongar Motors, which includes details of its lorry and p.s.v. fleet.

Red Arrow Deliveries Ltd, which Dunbar had established in Birmingham at the end of 1933 (*RRT*, 58), provided the springboard for the National Conference of Parcels/Express Carriers. This derived from a meeting convened by Dunbar in September 1937 of hauliers with whom

Red Arrow had exchange or delivery arrangements (*RRT*, 64, 79-80). The surviving correspondence, amounting to hundreds of items, reflects the diversities of hauliers involved, ranging from Carter, Paterson and Pickfords to local operators such as W. Miles of Northampton and Leslie Walkley of Cinderford. Some of this correspondence is of a trivial nature on routine matters, but the letter-heads themselves are often interesting and informative (for example, listing towns served regularly) and the whole accumulation promises to provide a fascinating picture of a complex industry in a time of change.

Rates charged for traffic were at the centre of the concerns which led to the founding of yet another organisation in the field of road haulage (*RRT*, ch. 8 is essential to make sense of the organisational rivalries, inter-connections and overlapping). As Dunbar put it in a letter of 27 February 1939 to the general manager of a passenger transport company, 'The Government has made it clear that it intends that there shall be a proper rates structure for the Road Transport Industry in due course, and if this rates structure were to be compiled without reference to the special problems of the parcels carriers it might well be that many of us would be put out of business'.

Secondary intentions were to foster 'a large measure of co-operation and co-ordination between' members of the Conference. The involvement of passenger undertakings, some of which had a significant and consciously developed parcels traffic, is illustrated in Dunbar's National Conference papers by three files (1938) of documentation of road passenger transport undertakings' parcels carriage practice.

The diversity of road haulage organisations, referred to above, is reflected by a small miscellany of Dunbar's files outside the two main series, amongst which those relating to the Road & Rail Central Conference (RRT, 115) stand out. This note is being compiled in the New Year, at the outset of the preparation of the Dunbar

Papers for research consultation, which should be completed by mid-1995. As an introduction it has not had the benefit of complete cataloguing of the papers, but it is hoped that it is sufficiently balanced and detailed to suggest to would-be users something of their potential.

ROAD TRANSPORT HISTORY IN REGISTERS OF REPORTS OF OFFENCES

By Tony Newman

A couple of years ago I was browsing through the indexes at the Staffordshire Record Office. Under the heading 'Records of the Staffordshire Local Taxation Office', I found a number of *Registers of Reports of Offences* listed. On calling these up I was presented with a series of leather-bound volumes, similar to old fashioned ledgers, with printed columns and rulings. They covered the period from 1911 to 1947; there may be later volumes at present closed. The Registers have been used to record every instance where someone has been suspected of committing an offence relating to an activity where a licence was required. These offences include shooting rabbits, carrying too many people on a stage carriage, keeping a manservant, or even neglecting to deliver a declaration relating to a family coat-of-arms. Each entry gives the date of the suspected offence, the name of the person responsible, their address, the nature of the offence, and in the case of a motor vehicle its registration number. The final columns record whether the case was brought to court and if so what fines were imposed. The majority of vehicles stopped in the early years tended to belong to local people, but as time goes on the range becomes wider.

I realised that here was a primary source of information about road vehicles, their failings, their ownership and their movements, rather like a series of snapshots in the main street of Stafford or on the main roads in the vicinity, going back to the early days of motor vehicles. Since then I have written to every County Record Office in England and Wales enquiring whether they hold similar volumes in their collections. Although I described the Registers in some detail, some of the replies made me think that they had not fully understood my request. In other instances I was sent a quantity of gratuitous related information such as their holding of vehicle registration indexes.

I have tabulated the replies and now have a considerable amount of detail on County Record Office holdings relating to road motor vehicles which I will be happy to share with any researcher before they set out. I do not imagine that my findings are complete and there may still be Registers of Offences unlisted in County Record Offices. However, as this list below shows, there is enough to be going on with and I would like to hear from anyone willing to go into their nearest County Record Office which has responded positively. By a

co-ordinated search on the part of a small number of volunteers I anticipate that some surprising records could be brought to light and shared by fellow transport historians.

Likewise, if anyone comes across Registers which I have not listed, I should be grateful for the details to add to my list.

County Record Office	Years covered
Bedfordshire RO, Bedford	1909-62
Cambridgeshire CRO, Cambridge	1913-35
Clwyd RO (Denbighshire), Ruthin	1910-31
Derbyshire RO, Derby	?-?
Dorset RO, Dorchester	1909-35
Essex RO, Colchester branch	1889-1929
Essex RO, Southend branch	1928-67
West Glamorgan RO, Swansea	1921-26
Gloucestershire RO, Gloucester	1909-
Gwent CRO, Cwmbran	1936-40
Hampshire RO, Winchester	?-?
Hereford & Worcester RO, Worcester	1926-33
Hertfordshire RO, Hertford	1909-16
Humberside County Archive Office, Beverley	1909-57
Northamptonshire RO, Northampton	1909-
Staffordshire RO, Stafford	1911-47
Surrey RO, Kingston	1921-24
Dudley Archives & Local History Service, Dudley	1931-67
Wiltshire RO, Trowbridge	1942-75
North Yorkshire CRO, Northallerton	1909-34
York City Archives, York	?-?

BRITISH COMMERCIAL VEHICLE MUSEUM TRUST ARCHIVES, CHORLEY, LANCASHIRE

These archives are housed on two floors of a modern office block situated opposite Chorley Town Hall in the High Street, within easy reach of Chorley station, or alternatively the M6 (J27 or J28) or M61 (J8). The nucleus of the collection is the former records of Leyland Motors, including those of the many commercial vehicle manufacturers absorbed by Leyland after 1945 (AEC, Albion, Austin, Daimler, Guy, Maudslay, Morris, Scammell, Sunbeam, Thornycroft). The material includes specifications, lists of chassis built and publicity material. There is also a photographic section.

It is expected that records dating from the 1970s and 1980s will be moved here from the Leyland Spare Parts and Service organisation in Chorley when they are no longer required for commercial purposes, thus updating this excellent collection.

The archive is spaciouly set out, well housed and well run. It is open during office hours Monday-Friday, with late opening on Wednesday evenings. Visitors are welcome, but it is advisable to telephone (0257-266036) in advance.

ARP

BOOK REVIEW

British Roads Past and Present series. Wadenhoe: Past & Present Publishing.
A4, 96pp per volume, many photographs, maps, card covers. £10.99 - £11.99 each

Three volumes have so far appeared in this series launched in 1993: *Cornwall, Devon, and Oxfordshire*. They illustrate, mainly through pairs of 'then and now' photographs supported by extended captions, the visual changes that have taken place on our main roads since WW2. They are divided into a series of short 'chapters', each with introductory text, covering an individual road or a particular theme; some of the latter are general, rather than specific to the county concerned. So the *Devon* volume, for example, has chapters on the A30, on bypasses in the county, and on the evolution of pedestrian crossings.

The series subtitle, *A nostalgic look at the county's highways and byways*, indicates that it is aimed at a popular market, but we cannot cavil at this, especially when the standard of production is so high; this is a pioneering venture (there is very little else being published on the post-turnpike history of our road system), probably at some financial risk. We must wish the publishers every success. Nevertheless, it is suggested that they consider extending their period of coverage back to the beginnings of metalled roads for motor traffic early in the century — and with more in-depth coverage of the more significant themes.

GAB

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE HISTORY OF ROAD TRANSPORT IN THE BRITISH ISLES, 1993

[Reprinted from the *Journal of the Railway & Canal Historical Society*, November 1994]

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