

Journal of the Road Transport History Association

No.106 ~ December 2021

www.rrtha.org.uk

Contents	
1/	The National Cycle Archive Andrew Millward
10/	Bus Enthusiasm: The Role of Societies and Groups Amy Graham
13/	Some observations on the UK's shortage of HGV drivers Rod Ashley
15/	Membership renewal

The National Cycle Archive

Andrew Millward

This paper is based the presentation given to the Association's Autumn online conference on Saturday 16 October 2021.

The National Cycle Archive (NCA) is the largest collection of archives relating to cycling in the UK. It is housed in the Modern Records Centre (MRC) at Warwick University and the catalogue of the collection can be found at:

https://warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/archives_online/digital/nca. The day-to-day management of the collection, cataloguing, assisting researchers and undertaking necessary conservation work is handled by the dedicated MRC staff who care for many other collections of modern archives deposited in its excellent facilities.

This paper focuses on the work of the Cycling History and Educational Trust (Reg No 272792) which undertakes the administrative work involved in developing the NCA. The paper provides a general

background to the formation of the NCA, how the NCA has developed over the years, its collecting policy and future plans to develop the collection and the support provided by the Trust.

Background to the formation of the NCA

Cycles and cyclists played an important part in the development of roads and transport infrastructure during the 19th century, and latterly have exercised a growing influence on recent urban developments. However, while the history of cycling falls within the scope of the Road Transport History Association (RTHA) it has, perhaps understandably, attracted less attention from members compared to the major economic drivers represented by passenger transport and road haulage. Although it has been affiliated to the Road Transport History Association for over twenty years, not many members may know about the National Cycle Archive and this brief outline is intended to inform members about its work.

Although attempts had been made in the early years of cycling to create a collection of literature about what was then a growing interest these efforts ended rather sadly. The library of the National Cyclists Union which was a collection begun in the early 1880s was eventually transferred to Coventry Library, but was sadly destroyed, when Coventry was bombed during the Second World War. What replaced this collection was the excellent, but less comprehensive, library of H.W.Bartleet who also donated his collection of historic cycles to the City of Coventry.

However, the cycling institutions, in contrast to those in other areas of transport such as motor vehicles, canals and railways, were very late in

The Road Transport History Association, founded in 1992, promotes, encourages and co-ordinates the study of the history of roads, road passenger transport and the carriage of goods.

The Roads and Road Transport History Association Limited, a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales as company number 5300873.

Registered Office: The Bus Archive, 8 De Salis Drive, Hampton Lovett, Droitwich Spa, WR9 0QE.

Road Transport History Association Limited

Honorary President:

Dr Robert McCloy

Chairman:

Roderic Ashley

roderic.ashley@gmail.com

Journal Editor:

Peter White

13 Lingwood Gardens, Isleworth, TW7
5LY

peterwhite@googlemail.com

Secretary:

Philip Kirk

The Bus Archive, De Salis Drive,
Hampton Lovett, Droitwich Spa, WR9
0QE

philip.kirk@busarchive.org.uk

Events Organiser:

John Ashley

6 Cefn Glas, Tycoch, Swansea, SA2
9GW

john@globespinner.net

Promotions Officer:

Amy Graham

213bus@gmail.com

ISSN: 2044-7442

The Editor is always interested in hearing from members and non-members who would like to write an original piece about transport history and/or research for inclusion in this journal or online.

acting to preserve historic cycling records. At least part of the explanation for this was the lack of any serious academic interest in researching the history of cycling in contrast to other aspects of transport history, although this began to change after the formation of the Southern Veteran-Cycle Club in 1955, which was established to preserve historic cycles and for the serious study of the history of cycles and cycling. By the 1960s and 1970s academic research into cycling began to appear in areas such as social history and economic history, as the impact of cycling began to be re-appraised.

As a postgraduate student at Birmingham University in the late 1980s researching the cycle industry it soon became apparent that many records relating to cycling were widely dispersed and some of these were under significant threat from disposal or dispersal. While the Raleigh Cycle Co in Nottingham placed its archives in the Nottinghamshire Archives in the early 1980s, it was more common to dispose of what was no longer current in larger organisations and in the 1980s the Cyclists Touring Club had a sale of many of its unwanted artefacts and surplus books while the secretaries of small, but long-standing cycling clubs cared little about keeping minute books and scrapbooks from decades before. Alongside this some of the major auction houses such as Phillips were beginning to include cycling material in their specialised sales. This resulted in some historic material being sold to collectors abroad. Amongst the most significant items were an album of photographs taken of all the Consuls (regional representatives) of the Cyclists' Touring Club (CTC) compiled by its Secretary Ernest Shipton during the 1880s (something that the CTC wanted to buy but was sadly outbid at the auction). Other material sold to overseas buyers in that period included the minute books and early records of the Amateur Bicycle Club, (one of the earliest cycling clubs formed in the UK) and half of the signing in books from the Anchor Inn, Ripley in Surrey, the "Mecca" for cyclists in the late Victorian period, containing the records of visits of riders and clubs during the 1880s to the early 1890s.

When visiting some of the historians with their own collections I did emphasise to them the importance of keeping the collections intact.

Derek Roberts, the co-founder of the Southern Veteran-Cycle Club with his brother John, agreed with my suggestion. Later I encouraged Alf (A.T.) Johnson, whose incredible library and collection of machines were housed in a cinema in Downham Market, to donate his library to Coventry Central Library. Soon afterwards Alf's collection joined the H.W. Bartleet collection there.

The CTC legacy

However, a breakthrough came unexpectedly which provided the opportunity for a cycling archive to be created. Following the death of Frank Whitt, the cycling writer and joint author with David Gordon Wilson of the book *Bicycling Science* (1982), the CTC received a legacy of around £50,000. In his will he expressed a desire for the CTC to use some of this money for a historical project relating to cycling. After the directors used some of this money to fund an extension of its Club HQ in Godalming in the late 1980s there was £15,000 remaining. Derek Roberts, who was then serving on the CTC Council, was charged with finding a suitable historical project to direct the money towards. After having no success negotiating with a number of museums an appeal for ideas was made to which I responded. The proposal was that the remainder of the Frank Whitt legacy, along with the CTC's historic paper archives should form the nexus of a National Cycle Archive. Derek Roberts successfully took this proposal through CTC Council in September 1989.

Following its decision the CTC decided that the legacy money should be given to its then charitable arm, The Cycle Touring and Countryside Trust (CT&CT) along with its archives on loan to implement its decision to create a National Cycle Archive.

Charged with an important project the CT&CT looked for a holding institution for the archives and after some deliberation over possible locations at Nottinghamshire Archives, Coventry Central Library and the Modern Records Centre (MRC), Warwick University: it was the last of these which became the holding institution for the NCA. The senior archivist Richard Storey

(also an RTHA member) was very keen the archive came to the MRC because it not only lined up very well with the Centre's existing holdings relating to the cycle and motor trades, but he anticipated the expansion of the archives into a modern purpose-built building shared with the British Petroleum archives which would ideally suit a major collection the NCA was intended to be.

Following the signing of a loan agreement between CT&CT and MRC the first deposit of CTC material was received by MRC in 1992 followed shortly afterwards by the historic archives of the British Cycling Federation. Since then the NCA has received many more deposits of material and is still growing. It is now established as the single largest archive relating to cycles and cycling in the UK. In 2001 MRC received a £50,000 Heritage Lottery Fund grant to catalogue the collection and make the catalogue available online establishing the NCA as an archive of national significance.

The Development and Growth of the National Cycle Archive

The CT&CT became an independent charity following the decision of the CTC to become a charity in its own right and establish Cycling UK. Following this change and to reflect the heritage focus of its work the CT&CT changed its name to the Cycling History and Educational Trust (CHET). CHET has seen its cash assets grow to a value of £240,000 which it has received from donations and legacies from cyclists and individuals interested in cycling history. CHET has seven trustees responsible for the governance of the charity.

The trustees seek out collections and new material which are sorted and then deposited usually on an annual basis. However, owing to Covid-19 restrictions, deposits to the MRC have been delayed since March 2020. While the Modern Records Centre is the main holding institution for the NCA collection, on occasions some material has been deposited in other institutions where this is considered to be more appropriate. There are some deposits on loan to Nottinghamshire Archives (Sturmey Archer Ltd technical archives) and Coventry Archives.

CHET has also gifted some its duplicate items to other institutions such as the Shuttleworth Collection at Old Warden in Biggleswade.

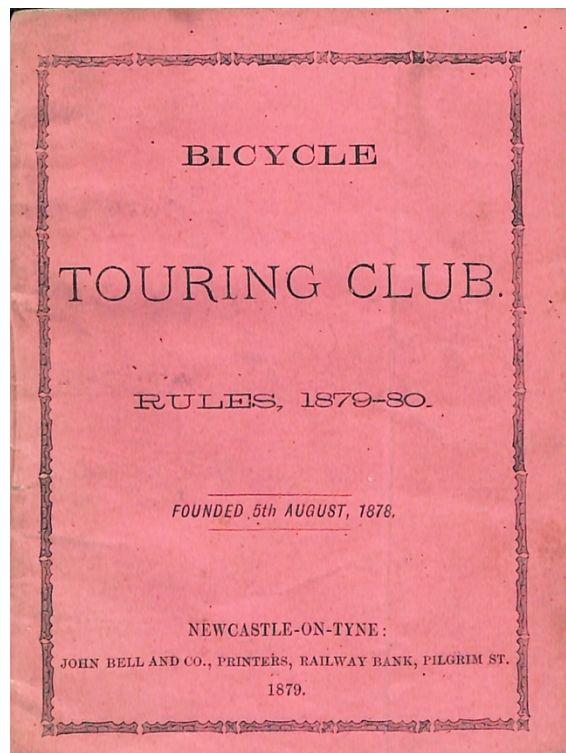
While the NCA has been built up mainly through items being placed on loan and as donated material, CHET has also purchased collections from individuals or on the open market where these are deemed to be important. While there are still generous donations made from individuals, it is more common that families dispose of items using online auctions, live auctions or through dealers as the commercial value of some material becomes better understood. However, there are still, sadly, some collections that end up in recycling bins and skips.

The NCA Collecting Policy

Given the limitations of archive storage space the collecting has to be selective. The primary interest is in paper archives although it should be noted that CHET also has a separate policy relating to its support for museums and collections of artefacts. The NCA avoids duplicating items that are already in copyright libraries and easily accessible to researchers, so books and periodicals are not regarded as a collecting priority unless known to be rare. The CTC archive also contained a large library which the NCA has complemented with the acquisition of some rare books donated or purchased over the years.

The online catalogue provides details of all the collections in the NCA, but the following highlights are provided by way of showing its scope.

The minute books and publications of the two largest cycling institutions form an important part of the collection. British Cycling and Cycling UK were both established in 1878; the former, then known as The Bicycle Union, represented competitive racing cyclists and the latter formed as The Bicycle Touring Club represented cycle tourists. However records are held for other national organisations such as the Road Records Association and the Road Time Trials Council along with material relating to many individual cycling clubs.



Above: Rules of the Bicycle Touring Club in 1879-80



The Cyclists' Touring Club archive contains the largest collection of original drawings by the illustrator Frank Patterson. Patterson's drawings appeared in the main cycling magazines from the late 1890s through to his death in the early 1950s. Shown above is a drawing which shows off his skills as an illustrator in a picture which captures the beam of a cyclist's lamp at night.



Above, a sketch by Patterson, and below a photograph of the same scene: cyclists enjoy locating the sites which he drew and taking pictures of how they look today.



Above: Amongst the ephemeral items collected reflect the social side of cycling such as dinners and dances

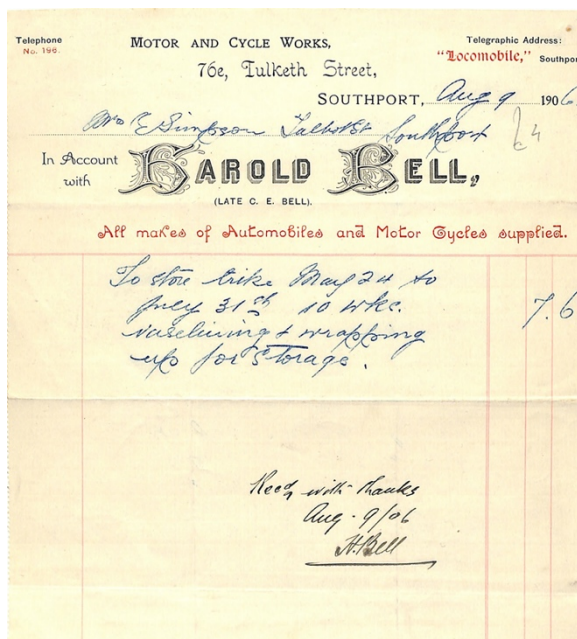
There are a number of collections of papers relating to important individuals connected with cycles and cycling such as John Boyd Dunlop, whose hand-written notebooks and various

papers relating to patent cases with which he was involved are an important collection. There are also the papers of Eric Claxton, a Civil Engineer, who was prominent in the building of cycleways in Stevenage and influential in cycling planning in the UK's New Towns as well as initiatives in Holland during the 1960s and 1970s. Derek Roberts' papers provide some rare material from the 1860s through to the 1990s which was donated to the NCA. Finally amongst the individual papers there is a fascinating and engaging scrapbook compiled by A.C. Armstrong, the Cycling and Motoring journalist, from the 1900s to the 1930s along with the records of the Canonbie Cycling Club – which casts a satirical wit upon the cycling establishment of the late Victorian/early Edwardian period. This has been digitised and can be viewed on the MRC website.

The Trust has also created its own artificial collection forming part of the archive. This is aimed at gathering certain categories of ephemeral material that are likely to be of interest both to researchers and to the wider public. Priority is given to trade literature such as catalogues and bills of sale which are often useful to collectors and restorers trying to identify and date particular makes and models of machine.



Above: One of the trade catalogues in the collection.

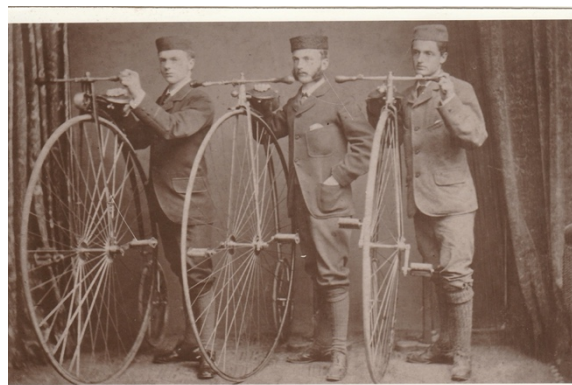


Above: Bills of sale have enormous value for researchers looking at the activities of particular firms or attempting to date bicycles by referencing the frame numbers on the dated receipts.

However, this collecting has been extended to cycling club magazines which had very small circulations and were not sent to the British Library, cycling racing and events programmes as well as photographs and films. The latter are visual and very conducive to online access. The Rick Howard photo collection has several thousand images covering machines and riders, groups of riders on machines covering the 1860s to the 1970s. Topical, often humorous postcards featured cycling themes and cycling often features on greetings cards of various kinds. These are very collectable as well as providing useful material for social and cultural historians.



Above: A group of five cyclists standing with their pneumatic-tyred machines c1897. The ladies are wearing fashionable cycling dress, but not rational costume.



Above: Three cyclists standing with their bicycles c1878. They are members of a cycling club wearing the Club uniform. Cycling during this period was a recreational activity and mainly for young men. Joining a cycling club enabled them to travel more safely together in a group and provided opportunities to socialise. The price of a bicycle was between £10-18 for most of the makes at that time, so was affordable by only the more affluent sections of society. Cycling did not become a major working-class activity until the inter-war period.



Above: Edwardian postcard. As cycling was very topical it featured in many comic postcards which were made commercially at that time and were a very popular means of communicating as they were cheaper to send than a letter. Postcards depicting inconsiderate road users of all kinds were quite common. "Scorcher" was another name referring to cyclists who rode fast and furiously without regard to pedestrians or other cyclists.



Above: Satirical and topical postcards were also commercially produced. The Suffragist Movement attracted a good deal of interest as well as the idea of the "New Woman" appearing in the late 19th century up to the First World War. This postcard dates from about 1910 and the bicycle appears to represent an outlet for the newly found spirit of freedom.

Future Developments

CHET's administrative responsibility for the NCA continues along with its role in promoting awareness of its heritage-related work. Through this effort it can attract more personal donations of material as well as more users. In recent years this has led to a number of initiatives:

a) Digitisation. When the NCA was conceived the idea was to build a collection of material that could be visited by researchers. Provision was made to microfilm some items and make copies to send to those who could not visit the MRC, but the landscape has changed significantly over the last 20 years owing to the demands for online access to the collection. Although the catalogue is available to researchers online only a limited

amount of the collection has been digitised to enable online access.

Amongst a number of initiatives, the MRC has digitised a collection of the travelogues made by cyclists from the 1880s to the 1930s and some of the lantern slides produced by cycling writers such as Fitzwater Wray (who wrote under the pseudonym "Kuklos" in major cycling magazines pre-WW2). For its part CHET has funded the scanning of its film collection which will be made available to view on its own website as well as that of the MRC. This includes public information films from the post-war period and films made by the Turner Brothers of the Road Time Trial Council National Championships from 1965-1983.



Above: Cover of the double DVD containing sound film of the RTTC national Championships captured on film by the Turner brothers 1978-1983. CHET had these 8mm films professionally restored and along with the silent films recorded between 1965-77 will soon be available to view online on the MRC and CHET websites.

Cycle History

24



Proceedings of the
24th International Cycling History Conference
Lisbon, Portugal
May 2013

Above: CHET has promoted research into cycling history with grants over the years. Cycling History (Publishing) Ltd has also published some the Proceedings of the International Conferences for Cycling History and donates six copies each year to the UK copyright libraries.

The Trust has acquired some significant collections of photographic archives. Two photographers of cycle racing in the post-war era, Jim Love and John Coulson, have had their archives bought by the Trust. However, many of these are negatives and contact prints which need digitising as a precursor to identifying and cataloguing them; something to make the archivists job a bit easier.

b) Publishing. CHET has been keen from its early days to make early publications available to researchers as reproductions drawing in the collection. In 2010 CHET established Cycling History (Publishing) Ltd (Co No 7399879) to undertake its publishing work and limit its liability. You can view the range of publications available online at www.chpublishing.org.uk.

c) Promotion. While the public face of the collection is the MRC's online catalogue to generate greater public awareness of CHET's

work it also has its own website CHET.org.uk. The idea is for CHET to raise its public profile to explain its objectives to preserve cycling's heritage and to provide ongoing news of its activities. This has the added benefit of attracting further donations. Amongst recent donations has been a complete run of *Cycling* magazines from 1891 – 1994 and original loose copies of the Cyclists Touring Club Gazette from 1883-1896 with original covers and adverts (usually missing from the bound volumes and ideal for scanning). More recently the archives of Howard Boyd, a cycling and road safety campaigner were deposited by his widow, Esther Boyd.

d) Preservation. The public clearly likes to hear positive stories around rescuing what would otherwise have been destroyed and efforts to conserve and repair items so they can be accessed without further damage. CHET has been identifying archives in private hands and encouraging owners to place items on loan or allow digital copies to be made. This was done recently with the diaries of a teenage cyclist called Alfred Johnson written between 1882 and 1884 where the family wished to retain them, but allowed a copy to be made from which a facsimile edition has since been made.

e) Independence. Originally the charitable arm of a much larger organisation with its trustees drawn from the CTC's governing body with the opportunity to draw on the services of the Club's officers and staff if necessary, now as an independent charity the Trust has to manage its own affairs and has grown to the point where it has to look beyond volunteers and consider buying in services to fulfil important roles. As the collection gets larger a Collections Manager, a Publicity Officer and Marketing/Sales Officer are being considered for recruitment.

f) Fund raising. CHET has had the good fortune to have received legacies and donations to fund its work, but it needs to secure regular sources of income to maintain its storage and ongoing costs associated with its day to day running.

In conclusion, there seems to be no end to maintaining an archive given that new material is always turning up and some of what is being produced today will be collected for archiving in

the future. At the moment there is a lot of catching up to do particularly with respect to cataloguing the backlog that is accumulating as well as digitising selected material from the collection and making it available online. The trustees have been contemplating a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for some years and probably that will be where their efforts will be directed in the future.

At the end of the presentation questions were invited by the chairman and the following were asked and responded to as follows:

1. In the early days of cycling were women allowed to join cycling clubs?

The cycling clubs formed in the 1870s and 1880s particularly when the "Ordinary" or high bicycle dominated were exclusively male. Women did join the touring clubs when they would have ridden tricycles at that time, and they were often cycling with men.

With the development of the safety bicycle c1885 and its widespread adoption by both men and women, the barriers broke down and many clubs allowed women to join. This is reflected in the many pictures from the 1890s showing club rides at the time. Bicycling was seen as a good way to socialise. Women were wary of cycling alone at that time fearing abuse verbal and physical particularly if they wore "rational dress".

2. Are there any records of the Clarion Cycling Club?

There are some newsletters/magazines called *Boots and Spurs*. There are some Club handbooks in the collection. (NB I have provided a link to the catalogue in this paper to enable anyone to search the contents of the NCA).

3. Why did the Cycle Industry get established in Coventry?

The main reason was that Coventry had an excellent skill base suited to light engineering – clocks, watches and sewing machines were already made in Coventry. However, chance played a part. Rowley B Turner worked in France at the time the two-wheeled French velocipede was invented and in 1868 was beginning to be widely adopted in Paris and set off something of

a craze. Rowley's uncle Josiah Turner worked in Coventry as foreman of James Starley's European Sewing Machine Co (later the Coventry Machinists' Co) and Rowley purchased one of the French machines and showed it to his uncle and Starley on his return to England. They decided to manufacture machines for Rowley B Turner to sell in France.

Having got started James Starley's skills in light engineering came to the fore and he began improving these early bicycles and when the French ceased making bicycles during the Franco-Prussian War 1870-71, Starley's company became a leading manufacturer and the industry shifted from France to the UK. Coventry was also helped by its access to the metal trades of Birmingham and Black Country.

Viewpoints and opinion expressed by contributors to this Journal should be seen as the personal views of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Association.

Bus Enthusiasm: The Role of Societies and Groups

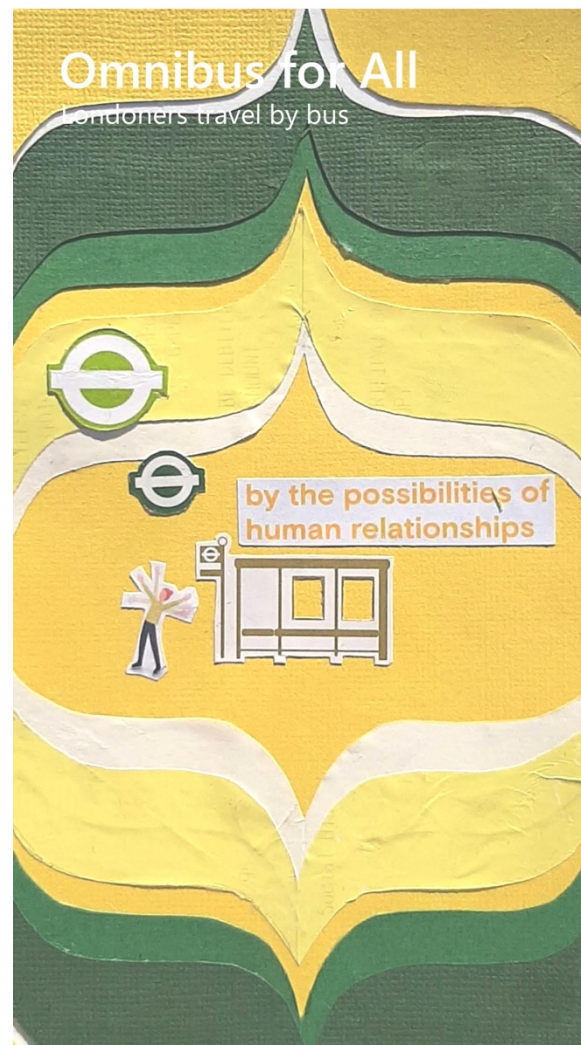
Amy Graham

The Editor has invited me to reflect upon the role of groups such as the Omnibus Society and others in the expression of bus enthusiasm, noting that several of my participants are longstanding members of various organisations.

At the Autumn Conference, I presented an overview of my PhD research project at Sheffield Hallam University which is concerned with broader questions such as the definition and practice of heritage within the UK cultural context; how to assign value and significance to our own life experiences and the role of material artefacts in recording and encouraging us to re-live those experiences. My research is qualitative and does not claim to be 'representative' of all enthusiasts or their communities. However, I offer some reflections based on the information provided by the research participants, to whom I am most grateful for sharing their time, experience and expertise.

Note: Most of my participants were recruited through an open call via email sent to members of the London Historical Research Group of the Omnibus Society in July 2019. I am therefore most familiar with the interests and activities of this organisation. Twelve participants were involved in the stage of my research at the London Transport Museum and riding the 15 Heritage Service; five additional participants were interviewed for the following stage of my research related to their personal collections of bus-related artefacts.

ON LONDON'S BUSES



Above: An example leaflet cover for proposed trail around the London Transport Museum based on research observations.

A Solo Endeavour

For most of my participants, their interest in buses began in childhood, either through living on a bus route or near a bus garage, or otherwise travelling to school or to visit relatives by bus. Starting at between the ages of 8 and 12, they were allowed by their mothers to ride the network alone (using 'red rover' tickets), and so the hobby was also linked to a growing sense of personal freedom and autonomy.

Although most often characterised as a solo endeavour, the early days of bus spotting were shared with particular friends; indeed, it might have been an older brother of a school pal who first introduced them to the hobby or even a teacher who would take them out on spotting excursions. These early friendships have sometimes been lost, although several participants have maintained friendships across five or more decades.

Bus enthusiasm is normally sparked by something. In my case, I became very interested in the names of bus stops in relation to the local history of my route. For my participants, the colours, shapes, sounds and smells of buses all had their appeal; also the differences between vehicles and operators (if outside of London); ABC books and other published fleet lists facilitated spotting as hobby.

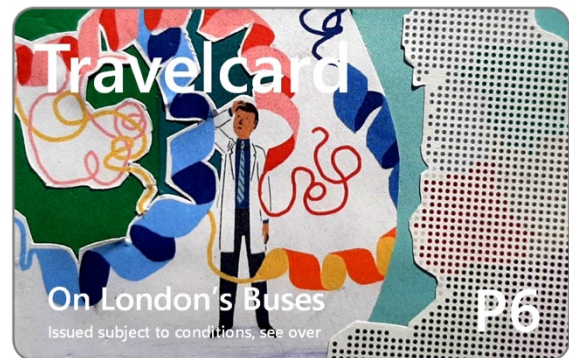
My absolute favourite ‘origin story’ for his enthusiasm, was a participant sharing with me some details his mum had written in a baby record book when he was very little. The entry read in small, neat handwriting and blue ink:

14. 7. 48. Saw first bus - eyes nearly popped out of his head!

Sharing and communicating

Bus enthusiasm and spotting as an activity can of course be conducted alone and discreetly which makes it an accessible hobby for most people. However, there were lots of examples where collaboration and sharing information further developed the interest. This might be fellow spotters informing each other about the first or last running days of certain routes and vehicles; or plundering the local garage yard for physical bits of vehicles (in one case, bits of trolleybus as they were being decommissioned). Or it might be more sustained engagement with local transport staff: one participant lived at the terminus of a bus route, and he became friendly with the local conductors. They would collect up all the used

tickets on the floor of their bus and give these to my participant. It was reportedly quite easy to gain access to garages in order to photograph bus fleets.



Above: In accordance with academic research practice, participants were identified in anonymised form, in this case by numbered images in Travelcard format

One interviewee described how he had set up his own specialist interest group during secondary school called the ‘Bus Club’ which involved both adults and children. His posters were mercilessly amended to read: ‘Bust Club’. However, this didn’t discourage him from later getting involved in the establishment of the short-lived Teesside Omnibus Circle.

Sustaining the interest

As highlighted by the above, groups and societies have played a significant role in sustaining the interest across decades. The distinction between the main groups was explained as follows: the Omnibus Society is more interested in the development of routes and other ‘social’ aspects

of bus development, whilst the PSV Circle are particularly interested in fleet and business records. Other groups mentioned include: the Model Bus Federation, and The Friends of London Transport Museum.

Participants are variously involved across these societies either as members or more actively involved in committee work, research, or other volunteering (such as preparing for the distribution of the monthly newssheet, helping on open days and tours). Regular publications, meetings, and excursions provide ongoing points of contact for and between members. Several participants mentioned long-term membership of the Omnibus Society as an almost 'proof' of their enthusiast status and dedication to the interest (one joined in 1962, another 1963, another 1971, no doubt others are equally longstanding members).

For several participants their hobby informed their choice of careers. Two worked as conductors in their summer holidays or spare time around other jobs, whilst others joined the London Transport Management Training scheme, and others were trained as drivers. Several participants maintain a PSV licence for volunteering purposes or because they own or have owned heritage buses. One participant had worked in management for TfL and after working in the private sector for some time became a London bus driver serving for 14 years before retirement.

Making a contribution

Motivations for engagement with groups and societies included the social contact and the joy derived from the interest itself but also a desire to 'make a contribution' - to recording the status of bus operations now and historically. For some, this manifests as volunteering in an educational capacity with the London Transport Museum; others have been inspired to write autobiographical articles for the Omnibus Society

magazine or other local bus publications and even publish their own full autobiographies. One of my interview participants has used material from his ephemera collection to publish two books on East Kent; another has produced original research about municipal bus services in south Wales; a third collects timetables from across the country to report on even the most minute changes in service today. This is a level of dedication, attention to detail and so on which reflects the importance of the hobby and the bus industry for these individuals.

The fact that these individuals also volunteered to participate in my research reflects their desire to make a contribution, communicate about their interest and share their expertise and passion. It was wonderful to have several of them in virtual attendance at the Autumn Conference – I reflect their comments by saying how much I enjoyed my time with them at the Museum, riding the 15(H) and latterly interviewing them – I consider them more than just 'subjects' for my research, they are companions in our shared love of buses and may hopefully be considered friends.

The Autumn Conference took place on Saturday 16 October in web format, with comprehensive presentations on the National Cycling Archive by RTHA member Dr Andrew Millward, and RTHA Director Amy Graham on progress on her PhD thesis, at Sheffield Hallam University within the subject field of Cultural Heritage Studies. Three of the participants in this study joined the meeting as guests. Both authors have helpfully provided comprehensive papers, published in this issue. A recording of the event will be available in due course: the link will appear on the events page of the website, www.rrtha.org.uk/events.

Some observations on the UK's shortage of HGV drivers

Rod Ashley

Much press coverage in autumn 2021 has focused on the shortage of HGV drivers in the UK. Depending on the newspaper's allegiances, media views have predominantly either blamed Brexit or Covid for the situation. In truth, whilst both phenomena are contributory factors, the reality has been more complex than this. In July 2021 the Road Haulage Association (RHA) published a survey among hauliers <https://www.rha.uk.net/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=IC10C-FWmVo%3d&portalid=0×tamp=1627564639720> and the 615 responses are of interest.

The table below, courtesy of BBC News (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/57810729>) indicates a range of reasons.

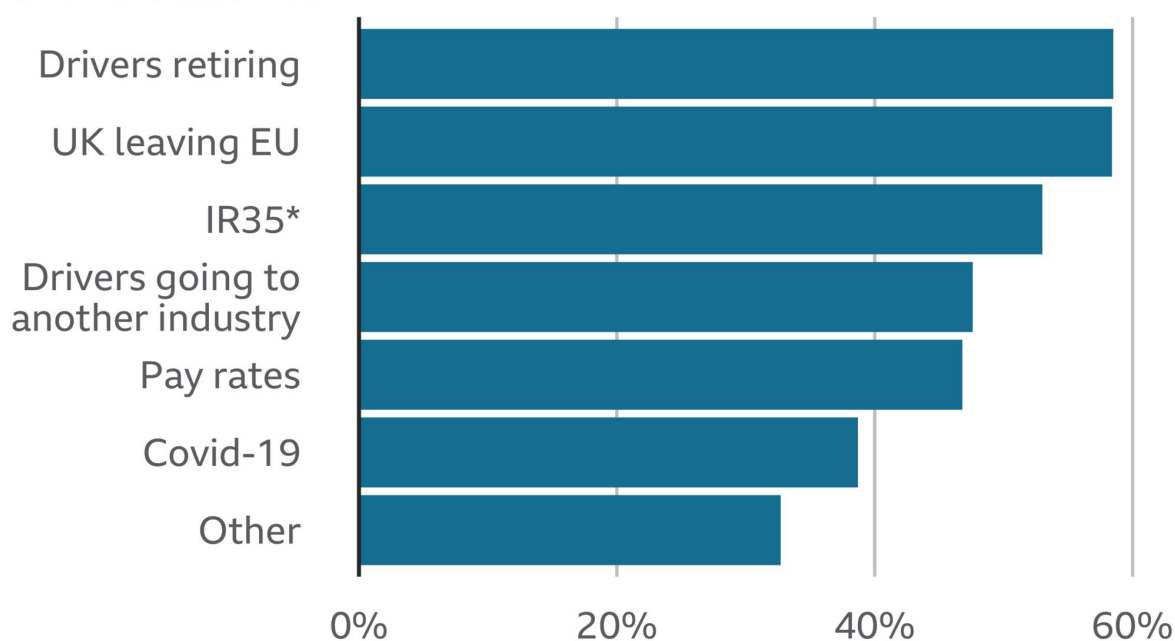
To place into historical context, the Office for National Statistics' Annual Population Survey indicates that 16,000 fewer EU nationals were working as HGV drivers in the year ending March 2021 than in the previous year. The RHA, among other bodies, insists that it had warned the UK government of the impending crisis in spring and summer 2021.

Examining the RHA's findings in descending order of reasons given (although multiple reasons were permitted): Firstly, a significant number of drivers are retiring. The median age of HGV drivers is 55 and few recruits are in their 20s or 30s (a reason often being cited is the family-unfriendliness of the role). The UK leaving the EU is cited a close second reason with the additional post-Brexit bureaucracy deterring drivers from crossing the English Channel.

The reform of IR35 rules have made it more difficult and expensive for workers from Europe

Hauliers' reasons for driver shortage

Percentage selecting each reason in survey, multiple answers allowed



*Recent changes have been made to off-payroll working rules, known as IR35

Source: Road Haulage Association survey, 615 responses

BBC

to be employed in the UK. It isn't worth the hassle, particularly for short term contracts. A significant number of drivers have certainly gone into other industries – and this includes those scaling down from HGV vehicles to become delivery drivers of smaller vehicles for supermarkets currently willing to pay a welcome bonus. The shortage has also impacted the bus and coach sector¹ where, ironically, some drivers are leaving for the welcome bonus paid by the haulage sector – time will tell whether this lure is sustained. Of course, bus and coach drivers have a greater interface with the public and (whilst there is no hard evidence that this is a factor), they may be more wary of contracting Covid from the public.

Pay rates themselves have been a problem across the whole of Europe but the situation is exacerbated by drivers in continental Europe generally being paid by the hour, whereas in the UK self-employed drivers are paid per mile (or kilometre). Employed drivers do not necessarily get paid in the UK for delays, whether caused by traffic, weather conditions, breakdown or Brexit paperwork – it can depend on the employer's conditions of employment.

Covid is inevitably a contributory factor, although this survey suggests it is fairly low down. 'Other' factors would include the working conditions of drivers, particularly the lack of rest, toilet and sleeping facilities en-route. Whilst modern HGVs have sleeping facilities and even microwaves, they lack the comfort of even modest hotels and there is no space for exercise or stretching. A recent BBC programme showed the transformative nature of enhanced truckers' rest facilities at the port of Holyhead – but why has it taken so long for truckers' welfare to be acknowledged? Also of significance is the time taken to recruit, train and license new drivers – up to eight weeks. How many of the vacancies will be filled by EU drivers willing to forego

longer-term contracts (despite the relaxing in the UK of cabotage rights for EU hauliers) in order to assist the UK remains to be seen.

Whilst the overall reasons are complex, driver shortages are a problem also in continental Europe. Online job advertisements for HGV drivers are commonplace in Poland, Germany, Italy and France. However, the impact of shortages in mainland Europe is less severe than in the UK, as EU-based companies can call on freedom of movement across member countries. This cannot take place in the UK and is affecting other sectors also, such as fruit-picking, hospitality and care sectors. Whether visa options will be extended to attract migrant workers into these sectors may well depend on the uptake of EU driver applicants and the political expediency of a core Brexit promise being seen to be broken. In the USA a similar problem has been described not as 'driver recruitment' but 'driver retention', where the poor working conditions soon make drivers disillusioned².

One noticeable impact on M4 traffic in south Wales has been the reduction in Republic of Ireland-registered trucks heading between the West Wales ports and the English Channel ports. Freight volumes are down 30% compared with 2020. For the ports of Holyhead and Liverpool, freight volumes are down 19%. In both cases, new ferry services (32 in total according to the Guardian³ newspaper) direct between the Republic and continental Europe bypass the UK and the associated additional paperwork and charges.

The driver recruitment and retention situation is worthy of an academic study. We would be interested to hear of any researchers working in this field.

¹ Becky Johnson. 'They're leaving in droves': UK faces bus driver shortage as HGV industry offers better pay. *Sky News*. 24 October 2021.

² Erin McCormick. Indentured Servitude: low pay and grueling conditions fueling US truck driver shortage. *Guardian*, 22 November 2021.

³ Lisa O'Carroll. Goods shipped directly from Ireland to EU up by 50% in six months. *Guardian*. 30 November 2021.

Membership Renewal Notice

The directors are pleased to be able to hold the annual subscription to the Association at £20. Subscriptions are due on 1st January 2022.

We hope that you will continue to support the Association with your membership, to receive the quarterly Journal, to participate in Zoom meetings and face-to-face Business Meetings when these are possible.

To continue your membership, please arrange for payment by one of these methods:

- By bank transfer to CAF Bank, Sort Code 40-52-40, Account Number 00031614. Please let us know by email that you have made a payment, as it is not always clear on our bank statement. This is the preferred method of payment as it minimises admin work.
- By cheque (payable to the Roads & Road Transport History Association Ltd.) posted to: R&RTHA, c/o The Bus Archive, 8 De Salis Drive, Hampton Lovett, Droitwich Spa, WR9 0QE.

Please note that the default method of delivery of the Journal and all other communications will now be via email. This is to contain costs and is made at the request of members. Printed copies can still be posted out to you if you wish – please let us know if you would like this option.

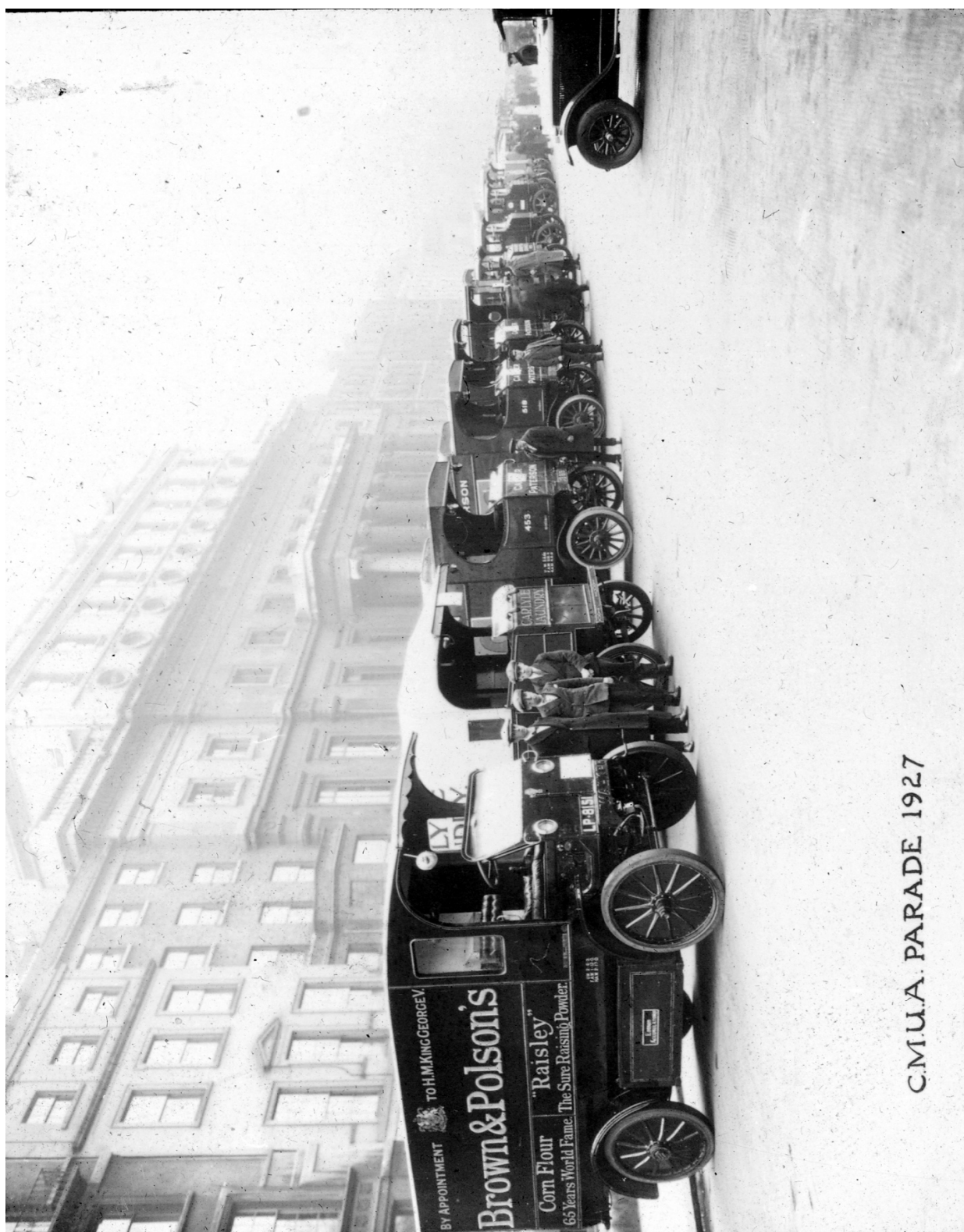
Please also tell us if any of your details (address, telephone number, email address) have changed since last year.

Our email address is info@rrtha.org.uk.

It would help the Association and its officers if you could make payments as soon as possible, to cut down on admin work and avoid us chasing you for payment – we are all just volunteers. Thanks in advance for your support!

The chairman and committee of the Association send their best wishes to all members for Christmas and the New Year.

Copy date for Journal No. 107 is 6th February 2022.



An impressive line-up of electric vehicles at the Commercial Motor Users Association Parade of 1927.

(Photographer Charles Klapper, copyright The Bus Archive).