

Journal of the Road Transport History Association

No.108 ~ July 2022

www.rrtha.org.uk

Contents	
1/	Anywhere except Manchester: Ward Lock Red Guide Books as a source of road transport history Martin Higginson
13/	Roads, Rails, Boots and Suits: Reorganising the supply line and inter-service rivalries (part 2) Roy Larkin
23/	Book Review
12/ 22/	Annual General Meeting Autumn 2022 Meeting

Anywhere except Manchester: Ward Lock Red Guide Books as a source of road transport history

Martin Higginson

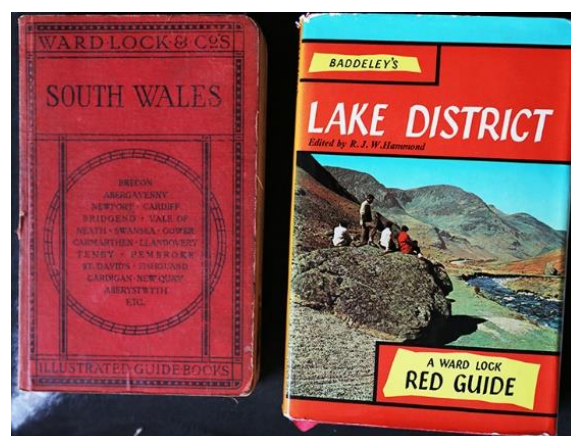
Origins

Ebenezer Ward (1819-1902) and George Lock (1832-91) met when Dorset-born Lock moved to London in 1854 and they started a publishing business. The website

<https://wlrz33.web.core.windows.net/page/a>

www.wlrguidebooks.com provides a time-line for the business up to 1954 and details of the series of Red Guides: list of localities covered, publication dates, presentational styles. Publication of the Guides began in 1880, with 72 issued before the end of the 19th century and continued for around a century, by which time the number of areas covered was over 200. The final series included revamped guides with yellow and red paper dust jackets and a small number of 'complete' guides from the 1960s and 1970s as successors to the classic cloth-bound red volumes. Principal coverage was of British and Irish localities, though there are also some Continental European guides, including to Paris, Switzerland and The Rhine.

Up to around 1930, when a stylised outline map was substituted, the covers of the Red Guides generally displayed one or more coats of arms for the locality/ies covered. Use of a list of place names on this 1927-8 South Wales issue was presumably because the Guide



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.

covered so many different towns. From c1960 some issues, such as this 1971 Lake District example, had full colour paper jackets and, as here, sometimes also gave the series editor's name.

Scope and geographical coverage

Most of the UK has been covered, in a mix of major towns and cities, smaller towns, rural areas and wider regions such as North and South Cornwall, the Northumberland Coast, North and South Wales and various parts of Scotland. The emphasis is on leisure and tourism destinations, although some industrial cities are included, such as Nottingham, Glasgow and Liverpool, the latter being of particular interest for historians of local road and rail public transport, including tramways. The areas covered by each 'urban' Red Guide often extend well beyond the place it is named for. A typical example is the 'Aberdeen' guide, which is subtitled 'Deeside, Donside and Eastern Scotland' and extends to Dundee and St Andrews. Several important cities are not covered, notably Manchester and Leicester. Sheffield is only briefly mentioned in the Nottingham guide. Maybe guides to industrial cities did not sell well, as those for Birmingham, Leeds and Bristol were only produced for a short number of years.

Transport and travel are just one element of the Red Guides, which provide comprehensive, structured summaries of each area: history, geology, economics, commerce, features of interest for visitors, area and local maps and town plans, photographs and directories of hotels and other businesses, structure of local government and listings of amenities: sports facilities, hunting and shooting, churches and chapels, recreational and cultural opportunities and itineraries for walking, cycling, motor and public transport tours. The format of each guide is similar, encompassing details of how to reach the area, hotel accommodation and reviews of the salient features of the main towns and surrounding areas.

Transport Access

Of great interest for transport historians is the Guides' coverage of how to get to and from and travel within the respective areas. The period covered by the guides stretches from the pre-motor-car era to the motorway age, with travel advice evolving accordingly. There is a notable contrast between guides from the pre-motor-car era, which cover rail and sea access, advise on suitable cycling routes; pre-motorway motoring access, passing through rather than bypassing intermediate towns; and the very occasional references to Motorways in the most recent editions, such as to the M1 in the 1980 Yorkshire Dales guide. Exemplifying pre-Motorway motoring, an (undated) early 1960s edition of the Lake District guide says the best route from London and Southern England is "via the Great North Road to within 2 miles of Wetherby, thence *via* Collingham, Harewood, Ilkley, Skipton, Settle, and Kirkby Lonsdale to Kendal (269 m. from London). There are numerous alternatives, which though not so fast running, provide better scenery and less traffic". In 2022 Kendal is 203 miles from London via the M1, said to be achievable in three and a half hours, perhaps around a third of the time the 1960s run would have taken.

One of the most telling examples of modal evolution relates to travel to the North Yorkshire village of Nun Monkton. The 11th (1923-24) and 12th (1926-27) editions of the Harrogate guide advise "Rail to Kirkhammerton, thence 3 miles to Nun Monkton. On leaving the station, follow the road leading to the highway to York. Turn along this to the right, and in half a mile take a road on the left which leads to Nun Monkton". A decade later, the 1937-38 (13th) edition recommends, after taking the York road to Green Hammerton, "A mile farther turn left (those who have come by bus begin the walk at this point) to Nun Monkton." In 2022 there are half-hourly trains to Hammerton, with York-Ripon bus 22 on what is now the A59 passing

the end of the road to Nun Monkton approximately two-hourly; remarkably little change over almost a century.

Extent of transport coverage

The amount of detail afforded to transport matters varies considerably between different guides, suggesting Ward Lock not to have had a standard compilation policy. For travel to each area, in addition to rail, sea travel options are regularly offered, even as late as 1950; also air services, largely post WW2. The Aberdeen guide provides less detail about local public transport than is given in some of the other guides. However, the post-WW2 Aberdeen guide does detail motor routes, which include warnings about the impact of the Firths of Forth and Tay and the availability of ferries on route choice. Local buses and tramways are briefly mentioned, including a recommendation for visitors with limited time to take the circular tram route, and a summary of destinations outside the city that can be reached by bus. The 1918-19 edition of the Aberdeen guide notes that visitors to the Cruden Bay Hotel, "owned and conducted by the Great North of Scotland Railway", "are conveyed between the station and the hotel and golf links by electric tramway". The hotel boasted a motor garage and offered a bedroom from 4 shillings, breakfast for 3 shillings. After 1932, when the railway passenger service to Cruden Bay ceased, guests were instead collected by car from Aberdeen, the tramway continuing for freight carriage such as hotel laundry. The tramway closed in 1940 when the hotel was requisitioned for military use; neither ever reopened and in 1947 the hotel was sold for demolition (Online.Aberdeenshire.gov.uk). The two tramcars are now at the Grampian Transport Museum (gtm.org.uk).

Coverage in the Red Guides is principally of passenger transport, with limited exceptions, such as at Cruden Bay, cited above. Guides for fishing ports such as Lowestoft and Yarmouth

refer to the fishing industry and its transport requirements. The Dublin guide notes that “A very convenient feature of the tram system is the **Parcels Delivery**. Parcels are called for on request or can be handed in to any tram and delivered in Dublin and the suburbs as far as Greystones – up to 7 lb. weight for 4d”. The North Wales Northern Section guide for 1921-22 (8th edition) refers to the availability of Town Porters in Llandudno: “Certain porters are specially licensed by the Pier Company to convey luggage from any part of the town to the steamers”. Other porters may be used, but on less favourable terms, such as liability for charges of 6d for a handcart or barrow or 2d if the luggage is carried by hand, and having to carry one’s own luggage from the pierhead to the steamer.

Transport modal developments

The 1908-09 (3rd edition) of the Stratford-Upon-Avon guide advises that “For those who do not cycle and are not good walkers, the best way to enjoy the country around Stratford is to hire a carriage. Several places of special interest, remote from the rail, may best be reached by this means...The charges for the hire of vehicles vary, but will be found to be reasonable, and the drivers are generally a respectable and civil class of men. The chief hotels have livery stables attached, where carriages and horses may be hired...A **Steam Motor ‘Bus** runs from Stratford to Shipston-on-Stour. Fare 1 shilling each way”. (This information may be out-of-date, as www.ourwarwickshire.org.uk, [consulted 6 April 2022], which includes a photograph of the bus, states that the service ran from 1903 to 1905). By 1919-20 (5th Edition) references have been changed to read “for those who do not *motor or cycle*” and “are remote from the rail and the public motor bus routes”. By 1931-2 (7th Edition) we read of Motor Coaches (“Saloon coaches ply daily between Stratford and London,”etc); there is a full list of Motor Bus Services; and Motor Parking Places and “several large garages” are identified. The 8th

Edition, c.1939-40, also includes a summary of long-distance road routes to Stratford from eight key cities.

Bournemouth is judged by the Red Guides’ authors to be particularly well served by buses and coaches, which “run, seemingly, *everywhere*...the chief difficulty is likely to rest in the selection of the trips, for all are attractive and they are so numerous” (1935-36, 16th Edition). Between the 1935-36 and 1940 Editions (16th and 17th), reference in the Bournemouth guide has changed from citing tramways to “The Corporation maintains a frequent service of trolleybuses and motor-buses to all parts of the town...A special service of observation coaches runs on the Undercliff Drive...Hants and Dorset Motor Services Ltd operate from the Bus Station in the Square a wide service over the surrounding countryside”.

The Edinburgh guide (6th edition, 1919-20) succinctly defines the variety of forms of public transport in the city: “**Trams and Omnibuses**. The service of cable cars came into use in 1901, the cost totalling over half a million sterling. Lines suitable for the cars have been laid all over the city and an excellent service is provided at low fares...A service of **Motor Cars** has been established between various parts of the city, and is well patronized, while **Motor Omnibuses** run to various country districts, such as Lassawade, Dalkeith, etc. Tourist *chars-a-bancs* ply in the summer between Princes Street and the most popular points of historic and scenic interest, such as Hawthornden, Roslin, Habbie’s Howe, Forth Bridge, etc.”. £0.5m in 1901 is equivalent to £65m at 2021 prices; for comparison, final cost of the current Edinburgh Trams system, phase 1, was £776m. Phase 2, the Newhaven extension, is expected to cost £207m (www.NewCivilEngineer.com, consulted 8 April 2022). Motorists and cyclists arriving from the Berwick direction were advised to “pass through Fisherrow to Joppa and follow the [tram] car lines through Portobello into

Princes Street, Edinburgh.” The 1936-37 9th edition Edinburgh guide reports that in 1919 “Edinburgh Corporation took over the antiquated cable car system of the Tramway Company and substituted for it an up-to-date electrical system”, with routes supplemented by Corporation motor buses and Corporation motor coaches making circular tours during the summer. Edinburgh clearly has a century-long pedigree in the operation of sightseeing buses.

Tourism to hitherto remote areas is shown as becoming easier due to the “the huge roadbuilding scheme” enabling visitors with “comfort-loving habits” to explore, for example, the north-west of Scotland “with freedom from anxiety due to bad roads”. Motorists were, though, warned of the sparsity of petrol stations, however “one can usually obtain supplies at the various country hotels” although “these establishments are not invariably able to cope with any but the simplest of repairs” (Inverness guide, 1939-40. 6th edition). Difficulties due to strict Sabbath observance are frequently mentioned in Scottish guides, but potential visitors are assured that the use of the Gaelic language is dying out (The Highlands of Scotland, 8th edition, 1937-38).

Tramways and motor buses

To trace the evolution of transport services as portrayed in the Ward Lock Red Guides, it is in general useful to start with as early an edition as possible. In the case of Lowestoft, however, the 1903-04 edition predates the tramway’s opening, which took place on 22 July 1903, the only reference in this guide to the town’s tramway being that “Parliamentary powers have been secured for a system of **Tramways** between Kirkley and Belle Vue Park”

Extremely comprehensive coverage of the city’s electric tramways is presented in the Liverpool guide (12th Edition, 1918-19). Readers are informed the system comprises

116 miles of track, operated by 600 cars, carrying three quarters of a million passengers a week an average distance of two miles for a penny. “Many of the cars are fitted with upper deck covers, adding greatly to their convenience and earning power, without to any serious degree interfering with the amenities of outside travelling in fine weather”. The guide includes a four-page list of 22 routes (showing route itineraries, fares, and service intervals) and a fold-out Corporation Tramways map. The entry for the Calderstones Park, Smithdown Road and Pierhead route is of particular interest for showing the through fare to be 3d, 1st class 4d. As described in the Guide: “An innovation was the introduction on certain routes of first-class cars, the fares being slightly higher than those by ordinary cars. The first class cars were luxuriously equipped, and their patronage was of such a nature that they have been put on other routes”. The brief list of just four motor bus routes also shows 1st class to be available by bus between Woolton and Pierhead: “Fare 4d (1st class, inside 5d.; outside, 4d)”. A dotted tramway extension from Calderstones to Woolton is shown on the map, presumably signifying ‘proposed’, as this opened in 1924. It is also observed that on the extension of the Edge Lane route to Bowring Park, “from Edge Lane the lines run on a grass track, constituting a boulevard tramway of notable interest”.

The 1921-22 (6th Edition) Nottingham guide has a brief but enthusiastic summary relating to the City’s tramways: “The total length is 20 street miles, all within the city’s bounds...The service is worked at a profit by the corporation and makes a substantial contribution to the rates”. The Glasgow guide for 1938-39 provides only a brief entry on the city’s extensive tramways, with a parallel resume of the Underground. An innovative fare policy is shown to have been in force, with all-day Sunday tickets costing a shilling for unlimited bus, tram and Underground travel. Weekday evening tram-only tickets cost 6d for unlimited travel after 5pm. Early editions of guides have to be

consulted to find information about small-town tramways, many of which had closed by the early 1930s, such as Great Yarmouth (1902-1933), despite, according to the 5th (1910-11) edition, having “proved very popular, enabling as it does every part of the town to be easily and quickly reached...The extension of the electric service from Northgate Street to Caister has been much appreciated”.

Torquay’s three-route network, which closed in 1934, is outlined in late 1920s editions of the resort’s Red Guide, including the opportunity for an 11-mile tour of Torquay, Paignton and, via a circular route, Babbacombe, for 9d. The fold-out Torquay and Paignton plans in the 1926-27 and 1928-29 editions each mark the tramway network in flecked lines. The Yarmouth, Torquay, and Lowestoft Red Guides each show how these smaller tramways extended beyond the boundaries of the parent town to serve neighbouring resorts and villages. In addition to the usual coverage of tramway and bus services, the Weston-Super-Mare guide includes a fulsome appreciation of the Weston, Clevedon and Portishead Light Railway: “a useful little line which runs directly between these places and saves the tiresome wait at Yatton Junction which travelling by Great Western often entails”.

London’s Tramways, in 1913 “nearly all are owned and controlled by the London County Council”. In the LCC area, trams were estimated to carry the entire population of London “considerably more than a hundred times in the course of a year”, with tramways in Greater London – this term is used in the 1913 guide – carrying 765 million passengers annually. The Kingsway tram subway receives a brief mention. The 1913 and 1922-23 editions of the London guide reminded potential customers “In entering **trams** and **motor omnibuses**, especially the latter, hold firmly on to the rail till you are inside or safely on top. This is quite as important if the vehicle is stationary as if moving, for the jerk caused by a

sudden start may send you headlong. On many of the principal routes motor omnibuses pull up only **at** recognized stopping places, marked by notices”.

By 1938, with services now under the London Passenger Transport Board, the 53rd edition of the London guide makes a two-page presentation on London’s buses, trams and trolleybuses. The guide quotes W.E. Gladstone, supposedly addressing an American audience: “The way to see London is from the top of a bus – the top of a bus, gentlemen...There are few better ways of appreciating London’s very real traffic problems”. Wise words that have lost none of their import since they were supposedly spoken in the latter part of the 19th century, although the quote remains unsubstantiated.

Bus, coach and tram routes and timetables are considered in every Red Guide, with summaries of public transport to, from, in and around the localities covered by each guide. The extent of coverage varies, from the enthusiastic detail, as outlined above, for Liverpool, to rather grudging acknowledgement for Oxford: “Motor Buses, - For fares and times – too variable to be given in a book of this character – *see* timetables published locally”, followed by lists of urban and out-of-city services. More typically, reference is made to locally available timetable books and how to obtain them, e.g. in Dublin “A Tramway Guide can be purchased for a penny from any conductor”.

The 1951 ‘Festival Edition’ of the London guide praises the speedy transit afforded to trams by the Kingsway subway and Embankment, along which 332 trams per hour pass during rush-hour, whilst also noting LPTB’s intend replacement of all the remaining trams by buses.

Cabs, carriages and horse travel

Most of the Red Guides provide details of cab hire charges and terms, for example factors such as fares by distance and by time, extra charges for keeping a cab waiting and consideration of supplements for night time and for carrying children (Aberdeen, 1918-19). The 1911-12 (10th) Edition for Bournemouth sets out in particularly fascinating terms how vehicles licensed to ply for hire were divided according to the Corporation's byelaws:

- Class A Carriages to hold four persons inside and one on the box, exclusive of the driver
- Class B Hansom cabs to carry two persons
- Class C Carriages for two persons inside and one on the box
- Class D Carriages for two persons
- Class E Bath chairs drawn by a pony, for one person
- Class F Bath chairs, drawn by hand or by a donkey, for one person
- Class G Carriages for two children, drawn by a donkey or goat

Details of conditions of hire follow, together with a full-page table of authorised charges from and to fixed places. By 1935-36 (16th Edition) cab fares are just said to be "as shown by the meter", although details of some specific charges remain, such as 6d "for each bicycle, child's mail cart or perambulator" and 2d "for each package carried outside", with two children under 10 counted as one person. The 1968 Guide (New series, 3rd Edition) makes no mention at all of taxis.

The London guide for 1913-14 observes that "**Motor Taxi-Cabs**, introduced as recently as 1907, have already practically ousted the two former types of horse-drawn conveyance, 'hansoms' and 'four-wheelers'. Indeed, a hansom is considered even now of sufficient rarity and antiquarian interest to merit a place in the London Museum at Kensington Palace.

The taxi-meter automatically records the fare...The vehicles are roomy, smartly painted, well upholstered, and silent running, and can be used either open or closed, according to the weather". How 'silent', one wonders? (maybe the writer was thinking of the early electric taxis in London which had been in operation a few years earlier).

The 1912-13 Guide to The English Lakes notes that "The coaching arrangements in the district are excellent and the charges very moderate.....There is a large and increasing public motor service between the principal centres". However, "For those who are unequal to the fatigue of ascending the mountains, or crossing the more rugged passes, ponies and guides are available at moderate charges". Cycling is "enjoyable if arduous. The C.T.C. notice-boards and the motor signs give the usual warnings of danger or caution, and road users are warned that these words are to be interpreted in their fullest sense". Motoring could be hair-raising. The Kirkstone Pass "is dangerously steep downhill. The surface is good throughout, but the collar-work is fatiguing and the descent dangerous (the meaning of 'collar-work' is unclear. Physical effort?). Motorists are **warned** that should the car run away with them (as it may), not everyone can have the luck to charge a stone wall, knock it down, have the car turn over on him, and then be well enough to crawl out, photograph the car, and walk healthily on to the hotel". This advice is still given in the 1928-29 edition. By the 1960s the warning had been modified to advise making the journey by way of Troutbeck to avoid the very steep direct descent to Ambleside.

Private motoring

Although there is inevitably greater coverage of motoring and car parking in later editions, as late as 1961 the Torquay and South Devon guide provides clear information on bus and coach services and how to use these for local

access and travel. From the late 1920s onwards access by car and coach is typically cited, with distances, the names of towns passed en route and occasionally travelling times mentioned, supplementing previous rail and sometimes also sea travel advice. The 1935-36 (16th) Edition of the Bournemouth guide observes that Basingstoke, “the busy town, with its narrow streets, is now avoided by a bypass”. Access to Bournemouth by motor coach is shown to take 5 hours from London and 12 from Liverpool, at return fares of 15 and 35 shillings respectively.

Coverage of motoring is of particular note in Dublin guides published after the formation of the Irish Free State. Although the 1930-31 guide states that “the difficulties connected with the Customs and licensing regulations have, with the approval of the British and Irish governments, been reduced to a minimum”, there nevertheless follows a page and a half of details of Customs Formalities and Licensing Regulations: import duties, special arrangements for vehicles imported temporarily by tourists, advance payments of duty and how to avoid the requirement for Irish number plates.

Beyond the text: illustrations, maps and advertisements

The Red Guides are also of great value for their illustrations, maps, and advertisements, each of which reflect a distinct historical period.

The Illustrations are generally well-printed, sharp, and correctly exposed black and white photographs on glossy paper, one or two to a page, many of them credited to well-known companies such as Frith and Valentine. Although a small proportion of the total, many of the illustrations portray transport and roads, exemplified by the following:

- **Leamington, 1920-21, p13, The Lower Parade:** open topped, open balconied tram in the centre of a wide, curving,

tree-lined boulevard, on double track formation, with a single centre standard carrying the overhead for both directions. The only other traffic is three two-wheeler, single horse traps, two bicycles (one of which might be a tricycle) and a small wicker carriage on the pavement, which is possibly a perambulator. There are some 15 pedestrians, including women with full-length skirts, and no motor traffic; which suggests the photograph to be much older than the guide’s date of publication, – probably Edwardian – but not before 1905, the year the system was electrified. Perpetuating the use of old photographs is an interesting feature of many Red Guides.

- **Walton-on-the-Naze, in the 1930-31 Clacton guide:** sea front with busy beach; line of vehicles, probably cab waiting for hires headed by motor cab LD326, followed by a 4-wheel, single horse open carriage; passing bicycle.
- **Isle of Man:** ‘Timeless’ pictures of the Snaefell Mountain Railway in the 1923-24 guide, which could almost have been taken a century later. Dilapidated, unsafe-looking wooden board-walk path to Groudle Glen – the same photograph is reproduced in the 1923-24, 1933-34 and undated (c.1951) editions. Victoria Pier, Douglas, in the 1923-24 Edition, with horse-drawn carriages, open toast-rack horse tram and crowds of people milling everywhere; Loch Promenade, Douglas, with late 1950s cars, AEC double-decker bus and horse tram in the c.1960 paper-jacketed edition



Above: **Cork, 8th edition, 1931-32, p.30:** Full page photograph of St Patrick's Street, Cork's smart, 35 metre-wide principal shopping location, showing an open-topped double deck tram traversing a 3-way junction on a complex two-to-four lines intersection/reversal point: car may be reversing, and perhaps the trolley-pole is being turned. Around ten assorted 1920s cars parked on either side of the wide street and only one horse-drawn vehicle, a small 2-wheeled cart, in sight. The large, new-looking building on the left is thought to be Roches Stores, which was built at the northern end of the street in the mid-1920s.



Above: A telling illustration showing how roads have changed is provided in the 6th (1919) edition of the Wye Valley guide. This shows a long-skirted lady walking along a stony, unsurfaced track at The Windcliff, three miles north of Chepstow: a century later, this is now the A466 from Chepstow to Monmouth.

Each Guide includes a selection of area/regional **maps and plans** of the main towns. Where there are tramways, these are marked as flecked lines along the relevant streets. Close scrutiny of town plans may reveal transport features of particular interest, such as in the Cork guide the 'Blarney Steam Tram', the Cork & Muskerry Railway, a light railway partly "along the side of the wide Western Road, where also the trams and buses to Sunday's Well run". The line closed in 1934, partly as a consequence of damage incurred in 1923, during the Irish Civil War.

Advertisements in the guides fall under several different categories of product/service, including hotels, travel options and services such as motor insurance. Period factors of note include hotels advertising proximity to trams, such as Torquay's Kistor Hotel: "I min fr. Sea

Front & Electric Cars". The Pier Hotel, Yarmouth, Isle of Wight (1925-26 Guide) proclaims the benefits of the roll-on/roll-off ferry: "MOTOR CARS. Best transit to the Island is *via* Lymington and Yarmouth. Cars run on by their own power, avoiding being slung".

Most of the transport operators' advertisements in the Red Guides are for railway and shipping concerns, including pre-grouping companies before 1923 and occasional advertisements for small lines such as the Glyn Valley Tramway (Llangollen, 6th edition, 1924-25), with a full page of text describing the tramway and important industries associated with the area, slate, and flannel.

14 Tramway Routes

GLYN VALLEY TRAMWAY.

Cheap Trips to the Valley of the Ceiriog.

THE GLYN VALLEY TRAMWAY affords facilities for visiting one of the most picturesque valleys in the Principality, and tourists travelling in North Wales should not fail to avail themselves of the opportunity of visiting the lovely district through which it passes, and to which it leads.

Starting from Chirk, adjoining the G.W.R. Station, the line descends through a portion of Chirk Castle Park until it reaches the valley level, about a mile distant, along which it runs in close proximity to the river Ceiriog, one of the finest trout streams in North Wales, and frequented by many lovers of the piscatorial art during the summer months. The river scenery, with its variety of changes, forms charming views along the whole line.

Castle Mill, the second stopping-place from Chirk, is within ten minutes' walk of Chirk Castle. Free access is given to the park.

The river scenery at Pontfadog, the next stopping-place, is particularly fine. An object of attraction here is an Oak Tree, said to be one of the largest in the Kingdom.

Glynceiriog, terminus for passengers, is most picturesquely situated, and is the centre of important Slate and Flannel Industries. The Slate Quarries are worked subterraneously, and may be visited by tourists on application to the Manager.

Two miles beyond Glyn, the well-known Stone Quarries, which afford employment to several hundred men, are situated amongst hills, from which lovely views are obtained.

Llangollen is only three miles from Glyn, and a good mountain road exists between the two places.

Open carriages are attached to the Trains, which are timed to run to and from Chirk in connection with the G.W.R. Trains.

For full particulars as to times, etc., apply to the Manager at Chirk.

A. WYNN,
Secretary and Manager.
Company's Offices, Ruabon

Only a few bus and coach operators' advertisements have been found, including one by W.H. Gubb for "Motor trips into the heart of Devon" by the 'Lucky Violet Cars' (Torquay, 1926-27). The 1920-21 (13th Edition) of the Leamington guide includes two advertisements for motor engineers, the Leamington Automobile Company and the Warwickshire County Garage, Stratford-upon-Avon, each reproducing images of high-class vehicles with uniformed chauffeurs; an indication of the audience the Red Guides were intended for. The *pièce de resistance* in the Leamington guide is the eye-catching double-page spread for 'Midland "Red" Motor Services', featuring two single deckers, an open Tilling Stevens charabanc and a covered-top bus on a Stratford-Shipston service. Among the types of vehicle offered is "Torpedo Chars-à-bancs". The well-known O.C. Power (See biography in the RTHA *Companion to Road Passenger Transport History*) is cited as the company's Traffic Manager.

LEAMINGTON.

The Birmingham and Midland

MIDLAND "RED"

*The Largest and Finest Fleet
Torpedo Chars-à-bancs in the*

BUSES LEAVE THE GARIBOLDI HOTEL
Kenilworth, Coventry, Rugby, Warwick
Southam, Barford, Wellesbourne
Shipston-on-Strour

DAILY CHAR-À-BANC TOURS FROM THE TOWN HALL.
WITHIN A RADIUS OF 50 MILES.
SPECIAL PARTIES CATERED FOR.

Local Office: EMSCOTE GARAGE, WARWICK.
Birmingham Office: 547, Bearwood Road, Smeethwick

Leamington

Motor Omnibus Company, Ltd.

MOTOR SERVICES

*of Saloon Motor Buses and
whole of the Midland Counties.*

LEAMINGTON, DAILY AT REGULAR INTERVALS FOR:-
Hatton, Knowle, Birmingham, Radford,
Charlecote, Stratford-on-Avon,
&c., &c., &c.

Telephone No.: 200 Warwick.
O. C. POWER, Traffic Manager. Tel. No.: 2577 Midland.

Sometimes a Red Guide may offer more than the publisher had intended. A fortuitous discovery, folded into a copy of the 1925-26 Isle of Wight guide was the complete, single-sheet timetable commencing Feb. 4th 1927 for Morris's Motor Bus Service, which linked Chale and Niton to Ventnor. The timetable is sub headed 'Southern Railway'. Attention to local requirements is noted: "When cinema commences at 6 p.m., bus leaves Niton ½-hour earlier" and "Buses connect with 9.5...trains

for Waterloo, and wait for arrival of trains at 11.48...". Also inserted into the same guide was a newspaper cutting of King Island, Australia, cricket captain D. Lord – with on the reverse a list motor vehicles for sale by Sullivan Motors Pty, Ltd, including a 1951 Ford Prefect (£495), a 1936 Plymouth sedan (£325) and a 1938 Ford V8 2-3 ton truck (£625). Road freight was the subject of an advertisement by Curtiss & Sons Ltd, featuring a solid-tyred steam waggon and trailer that appeared in the 1920-21 Leamington guide. The company's address is of note: "Royal Pantechnicon, Portsmouth".

The writer's collection of Red Guides only includes one 'foreign' edition: Switzerland, 1914-15. Motoring in Switzerland was not to be undertaken without considerable advance preparation: "Cars are only allowed during certain specified hours on the roads over certain passes.....From a motoring point of

view, Switzerland is a troublesome country, as a number of rather vexatious speed regulations are in operation on the roads where cars are allowed. A duty of 16s 4d per cwt. must be deposited when the car enters the country...Skilled mechanics are to be met with in all the principal towns, but motoring is not much practiced in Switzerland, and repairs, spare parts, etc., are not usually to be obtained by the wayside. The driver should therefore be a competent mechanic, and spare parts likely to be wanted should be carried". Posting and diligences are recommended alternatives. Steady horses and mules can be hired for mountain journeys: "the rider will do well to let his beast find its own way and 'fend' for itself, without endeavouring to check or guide it". Unsurprisingly, in view of the above, travel while visiting Switzerland features the extensive use of tramways, railways and steamers.

Royal Pantechnicon, Portsmouth.
FURNITURE, &c., WAREHOUSED.



CURTIS & SONS, LTD.
WRITE FOR ESTIMATE TO
Forwarding Agents

DEPOSITORIES.

PORTSMOUTH ..	.. Royal Pantechnicon	PLYMOUTH ..	.. 121, Tavistock Road
PORTSEA ..	.. The Hard (adjoining Harbour Station)	DEVONPORT ..	.. 46-8, Chapel Street
LONDON ..	.. 28, Farringdon St., E.C.	CHATHAM ..	.. 351, High St., Rochester
GOSPORT ..	.. 60, High Street	SHEERNESS ..	.. 71, High St., Blue Town
SOUTHAMPTON ..	.. 28, Queen's Terrace	HAVANT ..	.. Railway Stn. (adjoining)
RYDE ..	.. 1, Esplanade	BOURNEMOUTH ..	.. 180, Holdenhurst Road

Conclusion

This review has attempted to set out the breadth of coverage given to roads and road transport in the Ward Lock Red Guides, with an emphasis on guides from the period between the late 19th and mid 20th centuries, when travel was less predictable and uniform than it is now, and in some respects more of an 'adventure' than it later became. The review only scratches the surface of what the Guides say about tourist and visitor travel during the period under consideration. The review is mainly descriptive; no attempt has been made to classify or quantify material in the time given over to this survey. Considerably more time will be required to compile a quantified, analytical paper, covering such matters as changes to the extent of travel, journey times and speeds, evolution in the transport modes used, attitudes to different mobilities and the categories of localities visited.

Pertinent questions remaining unanswered include: Who used the Red Guides? Were they mainly middle class travellers, including visitors to Britain from countries such as the USA? In what numbers were the Guides sold; and by how much variation over time and by location? Who wrote them? M.J.B. Baddeley, compiler of the original Lake District guide, and Reginald Hammond, editor of several 1960s and 1970s 'Complete Guides', are the only names referred to. Who else was involved? Was there a team of regular compilers? How were the guides updated? Indeed, will it be possible to answer these and doubtless numerous other questions?

Ward Lock's company history, Liveing, Edward, *Adventure in Publishing: The House of Ward Lock, 1954-1954* (Ward Lock, 1954), commemorating the business's centenary, is regrettably – and surprisingly – silent on the existence of the Red Guides. One would have expected them to feature prominently, as a major and long-lasting component of Ward Lock's output. As to the subsequent period,

www.wardlockredguides.co.uk simply says Ward Lock was "taken over at some point by Penguin Books": the trail then goes cold.

If any readers of the RTHA Journal have carried out, or know of any research into the Red Guides, or have copies they wish to dispose of, the author of this article would be pleased to hear from them, at mhrcgm@gmail.com

Annual General Meeting

This was held in on-line form on 23 April 2022. The following principal matters were reported and determined:

- The 2021 minutes were approved.
- The financial position reflected a small loss, due to a combination of a donation to the Bus Archive and the commercial printing costs of a run of journals from 2020 and 2021, given that our previous complimentary printing by University of Wales Trinity Saint David had not been available. The financial statements were approved.
- Two successful online conferences had been held.
- Membership numbers remained constant in 2021 at 61.
- A small sub-committee was being formed to examine options for the future of the association.
- Peter White indicated that a good supply of materials for the Journal had been received but that he would appreciate suggestions for suitable books to review or to hear from members if they were willing to review books.
- John Ashley reported that Wales on Wheels would be taking place on 15 May 2022 after a two year lapse because of Covid.

(continued on page 22)

Roads, Rails, Boots and Suits: Reorganising the supply line and inter-service rivalries (part 2)

Roy Larkin

Part 1 of this paper appeared in our March issue, and part 2 completes the account. Part 1 recounted the history of road and rail transport operations by the Army Services Corps (ASC) and the role of an SMTO (Senior Mechanical Transport Officer). Supplies were delivered to the front line by Mechanical Transport (MT) from where the Divisional Train delivered to frontline troops using horse transport (HT). Supplies to the railhead were transferred to Divisional Supply Columns (DSCs) for onward movement. New companies were formed piecemeal and allocated as DSCs, or Ammunition Sub Parks [ASPs]. Substantial use was made of light railways (LR). Part 1 concluded by describing the severe conditions during the first few months of 1917, affecting both road and rail operations.

Life as an SMTO was a constant juggling act when the corps was in the line. Only when the corps moved into rest was there any respite. I ANZAC Corps SMTO was thirty to forty lorries short of those demanded every day during March 1917 [note that "I" Corps were designated using Roman Numerals. It helped differentiate them from Armies which were spelt, i.e. First Army, and Divisions which were numerals i.e. 1 Division].

The SMTO had to find the shortfall if the railhead was to be cleared without delays. At this time, the SMTO had no control over corps HT units, so was unable to call on surplus HT to supplement MT.¹

Lack of space prevented storage at railheads and lorries were loaded directly from trains. Thus, when only twenty lorries were available for thirty loads, ten lorries were required to do

two journeys. Those doing second journeys had to load, dump just outside the railhead then return to load the second. After dumping the second load at the refilling point, they had to return and reload the first load. Reducing the WE (War Establishments) reduced assets but not workload.

ASPs and DSCs had lorries administered by them for maintenance, record keeping etc that were attached to other units. Most were attached to Royal Engineers [RE] roads, signals, and tunnelling companies. General Hospitals, Field Ambulances and Casualty Clearing Stations, needed MT for collecting supplies.

If a DSC or ASP required seventy-five lorries but only had fifty serviceable, twenty-five had to be retrieved from the detached ones, often from RE roads companies, who were large users of MT. The result was that road making and repairs were either halted or at least curtailed. Roads inevitably deteriorated and MT gained a reputation for destroying the roads that were crucial in ensuring continuity of supply and vital for any planned advance.

Road transport flexibility

Roads offered flexibility impossible with railways and any planned advance was more reliant on the condition of roads than rails. As vulnerable to enemy shells and bombs as the railways, it was possible to repair, or build a new road around a large shell hole, within a few hours. Shelled railways were often out of commission for several days. Lorries identified as 'Roads' lorries were able to run contrary to traffic flows and use all roads, irrespective of whether designated for troops, HT, or MT.

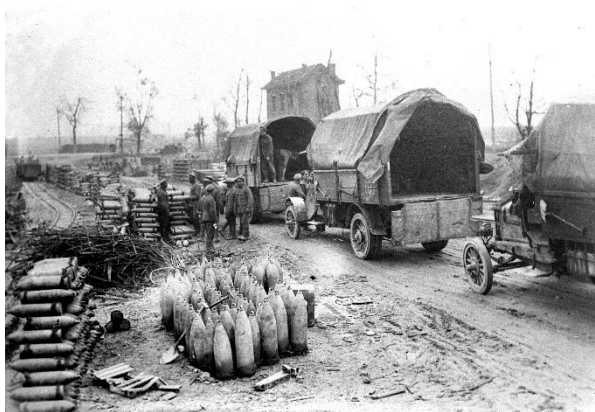
Maintaining a viable road transport system was vital for supply and to facilitate army mobility. Lorries could divert to different railheads or refilling points with a single message, whereas railways remained fixed. A train with thirty wagons that derailed or broke

down was thirty wagons not delivered and following trains delayed. In a convoy of thirty lorries, if one broke down the others simply drove around it and only a single load was delayed. Blown up tracks halted trains until repaired, with subsequent trains needing diverting.

The consequence of late trains was considerable, even without considering that reserve dumps were being reduced. Railheads were at the edge of towns and villages. LR sidings were simply at the roadside. It was essential that schedules were maintained to avoid gridlock around the railhead.



Above: A light railway siding, showing transfer to road vehicles



Above: A roadside ammunition park, showing the light railway on the left that fed the park, and the lorries on the road that continued the ammunition's journey.

Fifty lorries filled most railheads as they unloaded trains. There was a set time to clear each train so that lorries were clear of the area

before the next company arrived for the next train. When a train was late, the company scheduled to clear the following train arrived before the first had departed. They could not get to the railhead because the first company was still there. The first company was delayed leaving because the second company was blocking the roads. Equally, if the ASC were not available to clear the train, the next would arrive before the first train could clear the railhead or LR siding. Very quickly the supply line became gridlocked. Efficient working of railheads was crucial to the entire system from port to trench.

Lt Col C.E. McVittie, I Corps, SMTTO reports on the workload and difficulties that I Corps transport was experiencing.

On 5th April 1917, Heavy Artillery demanded 200 lorries. The following day the First Army demanded 150 lorries. These could only be found from the 200 previously sent to Heavy Artillery, which were not being used because the ammunition had not arrived. In the afternoon a stone train arrived at Hersin which required 23 lorries and these were obtained from the 50 still with Heavy Artillery.

At midnight I Corps HQ telephoned that a stone train had arrived without warning at Houdain and had to be cleared immediately as a further two trains were arriving. This entailed taking 20 lorries from both 24 and 40 DSC. These 40 lorries had already done a full day's work and would be needed the next day. 80 drivers were woken in the middle of the night to work an extra shift.

The following day, the 20 lorries from 40 DSC were still working to clear the second stone train, meaning 20 lorries had to be found to do their planned work. The lorries of 24 DSC had been taken away by their Division to do their normal work and needed to be replaced from somewhere. At a moment's notice 40 lorries

had to be found from somewhere if the scheduled work was to be covered. On the 8th, Heavy Artillery demanded 200 again but were only given 150 as that was all that was available.² For three days MT worked day and night. The 150 lorries with Heavy Artillery had to do the work of the 200 demanded. McVittie highlighted three days, but it could have been any three days at any time of any month.

Sir Eric Geddes

Despite his earlier reluctance to accept Geddes' intervention, Haig, wrote on 8th April 1917 that Major General Sir Eric Geddes, Director-General of Transportation

"Has organised the Transportation Service of the Army with great skill and success. He has designed and made a whole network of New Railways (a broad gauge and narrow) in rear of the front without which any offensive operation on the present scale would be impossible; and by forethought, skill and real energy has enabled the armies commanded by Generals Gough and Rawlinson to follow up closely the retreating Germans both during and subsequent to, the Battle of the Ancre. I recommend him for a KCB."³

Not a single word to acknowledge that road transport even existed. Geddes' reforms stopped at the railway terminus, so there was no reason Haig should mention the roads beyond the end of the line. Despite not a single man in any trench, hospital or headquarters office receiving any food, ammunition, medicine, fuel or clothing not carried on the roads in front of the railways.

Haig's praise was written before Geddes' reorganisation was fully tested and provides a curious contrast to the ASC reports of the previous few weeks. Haig was obviously more acquainted with the railway operation than the roads and had been open to change, supporting Geddes after seeing the benefits of

his reorganising. It is clear the rail and road sections of the LoC were regarded as two separate entities rather than an interconnected system.

On 1st July 1917 a conference was convened by the Quartermaster-General (QMG), at Haig's request, to determine the scale of reduction of MT on the Western Front. This was after Geddes reported that tonnage carried on LR had increased from 24,000 tons per week in February to 92,000 tons per week currently. Maj R Shelton, Deputy Assistant Director of Transport (DADT), Second Army reported that there had been no reduction in the use of MT.⁴

There was an obvious assumption that more tonnage on the railways, meant less for road transport. The increased use of LR only moved the railhead nearer to the refilling point, reduced lorry mileage and sometimes increased use of HT. Any reduction in MT was impossible as it was diverted to the RE and for other extraneous duties. Every additional ton carried by the railways had to be transferred onto roads for the frontlines. The extra tonnage was due to the build-up of materiel for the Third Battle of Ypres, not the expansion of LR.

Problems with rail

By August 1917, the situation had deteriorated further. The strength of LR was that it was quick and easy to manufacture and lay. Hundreds of miles of track were laid, implying that MT could be reduced. The speed it was laid was also its Achilles Heel. Once the ground became soft the tracks sank under the weight of the trains, derailing them. Trains did not work well when the rails were submerged in mud. Even on dry, hard ground rails easily distorted and derailments were commonplace.

On 3rd August XIII Corps SMTO recorded that

"after three days of rain, Light Railway track in very bad condition. Unless steps are taken to ballast the line, much additional work will be thrown on the lorries."⁵



Above: A light railway at Pervyse, midway between Ypres and the Belgian coast. Note it is simply laid on the ground. the distortion is evident.



Above: A French light railway in a sunken road to keep it hidden from the enemy



Above: A French light railway showing how it was just laid on the ground. Poor weather quickly caused it to subside and break up

All illustrations are from the author's own collection except where otherwise indicated.



Above: disruption to a light railway line

Despite the difficulties with LR, a census was conducted by the Fifth Army Deputy Director of Supplies & Transport [DDS&T]⁶ at the DT's request. This was to determine the extent that MT could be reduced as LR extended. The DT (Director of Transport) was only doing WO bidding, although it must be remembered that the WO had a far broader perspective than the 'local' GHQ in France.

None of Fifth Army's MT units could lose MT and maintain their current workload. The results were discussed at a conference on 12th August. The Deputy Director of Transport [DDT] advised DDS&T that the census was purely fact-finding to provide the War Office (WO) and QMG with up-to-date information and no reductions were planned. He also pointed out that every army in France had reported the same.⁷

Three days later, the DT was summoned to a conference by QMG attended by all the top brass from London and France. The agenda was to establish where reductions in MT could be made in France. It was nothing more than an exercise to make GHQ in France feel involved. On 18th August, the DT was again summoned to QMG's office and told that the

"Commander-in Chief had arranged to hold a conference on the 20th with a view to ascertaining from what sources men could best be obtained for replacing casualties in the Infantry."⁸

The decision had apparently been made, probably in London, before the first conference on the 15th.

The DT was instructed by QMG to prepare a statement of men available if Class "A" men were replaced by Class "B" men leaving a ratio of one Class "B" man to three Class "A" men. Despite the DT arguing that it would be

"dangerous and most inadvisable to attempt to train drivers with Units in the field."⁹

QMG was adamant, stating the decision had been made by the Commander-in-Chief. The result was that 3,061 men were made available from ASC MT Coys, 4,791 from Supply Coys, 9,536 from ASC HT Coys and 2,420 from Royal Artillery, making 19,808 in total.¹⁰

Problems arising from transfer of staff and vehicles

The road section of the Line of Communication (LoC) was stripped of 19,808 skilled men when it was under intense pressure and had already been worn down by months of struggle. ASC MT Coys were used to transferring men between units. Since 1914 MT had been transferred between units to homogenise marques as far as possible. Every vehicle transferred, whether to another unit or Heavy Repair Shop, had to be accompanied by its driver. It was an opportunity to move the worst drivers and lorries out of the unit.

Inevitably units receiving lorries from others received the worst. It is a common complaint that vehicles received were unroadworthy and drivers very poor. Every unit complaining about the poor quality of vehicles and drivers received, had themselves sent the same to another unit. It had been known since before the war that the more skilled and experienced drivers achieved the best fuel consumption and caused the least wear and tear. It is a

principle that still holds true in modern transport fleets.



Above: A Daimler three-ton lorry with a 'Walking Wounded' banner which was tied to the lorry to give the walking wounded directions to their pick back to the Casualty Clearing Station.

With desperate need for petrol economy, spare parts increasingly difficult to obtain and the impending preparations for the Third Battle of Ypres, the ASC was stripped of its most skilled and valuable men, replaced by men needing further training. The DT recorded on 27th June

"I have discussed with the Director of Supplies and Transport, WO, that the continued shortage of spare parts, and as a result thereof feel confident that the serious danger resulting from ever growing shortage will never be removed unless a radical change is made in the Home allotment of material and manpower for the production of Mechanical Transport spare parts."¹¹

The Director of Munitions Requirements and Statistics at the Ministry of Munitions gave his appraisal of the spare parts position on 14th August

"Many firms are so busy making new vehicles that they find it impossible to execute large orders for spares; e.g. the makers of Maudslay cars [lorries] have a large stock of orders since March 1916 which they have hardly touched. They say

quite openly that they would have to stop producing new cars if they were to execute the stock order for spares.

The priority for spares is low, generally 4, occasionally 3 or 2 and consequently it is difficult to obtain the necessary materials. Further, many manufacturers are busy doing ammunition work of high priority, e.g. aeroplanes and tanks, that they are unable to deliver adequate supplies of Mechanical Transport spares.”¹²

The Ministry of Munitions used a scale of one to five for allocation of raw materials priority. Top priority was one, reserved for the Admiralty and aircraft and received everything demanded. Five was the lowest and only received the leftovers. MT was rarely higher priority than four.

One year previously in June 1916, 3 Heavy Repair Shop, St Omer went some way to resolving the issue of spare parts shortage

“Major Rose went to Rouen for the purpose of cancelling outstanding demands made before December 31st 1915 and going into the question of the supply of stores.”¹³

The ASC considered that Class “A” men were the most highly skilled and as such were valuable assets to be retained. The WO considered they had earned the classification by being the best, the fittest, strongest and most disciplined. Attributes the WO wanted for the trenches. The ASC only supplied the means to wage war, so could make do without skilled men.

The position in September 1917

Lt Col Blamey, IX Corps, SMTO records in some detail the workload in September 1917 during these reductions. Heavy and Field Ammunition demanded 2,100 LR wagons, with only 1,746 available, leaving a shortfall of 3,540 tons of ammunition. RE stores demanded

2,127 wagons with only 926 available, a shortfall of 12,010 tons. The total shortfall of 15,550 tons needed 5,184 lorry journeys in addition to the normal work, assuming 3-ton lorries were used to capacity.¹⁴

Corps MT was also called upon to convey 49,000 troops to the battlefields, making a further 1,960 lorry journeys. Every one of IX Corps approximate 1,000 lorries had to complete seven extra shifts in addition to their normal work during the month. Every lorry in the Corps had to work for thirty-seven of the available thirty days. In reality, the extra shifts were more with 30% of the Corps MT unserviceable through being overworked.¹⁵

October’s workload was the same, prompting Blamey to record

“Light Railway Trucks demanded and supplied for ammunition and RE work shows a deficiency of 50% to those demanded; it will be remembered that a similar deficiency was reported last month.”¹⁶

That he felt the need to draw attention to his previous month’s appraisal, suggests he felt nothing was being done to resolve the overworking problem. He was however, only seeing the situation from his own position without the wider context. It is an indication that the frustration he vented in November 1918 was already festering.

On 31st December 1917, the Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig informed the WO, with letter No. 6712(Q.A1) of his intention to extend the system of pooling recommended earlier by the Army Council.¹⁷ January and February 1918 were spent further reorganising to create GHQ Reserve MT Coys¹⁸ by consolidating existing companies.

Haig recognised the flexibility of road transport and that any rationalisation was in effect reduction. He also knew that a static

army needed less resources than a mobile army. Reduction always resulted in assets surplus to establishment which would be returned to England. Haig therefore created GHQ Reserve Companies from the surplus, keeping them in France.

Pooling of resources

This reorganising involved the renaming of MT Coys. HQ Corps MT Columns were formed by merging HQ Corps Ammunition Parks with HQ Corps Supply Columns. Divisional MT Coys were formed by merging ASPs with DSCs.

The most important change was that all the Corps MT and HT came under a Central Controller. Previously MT had been wasted by Siege Parks, Brigades and Batteries having lorries permanently attached. Transport was used indiscriminately simply because they were the unit asset. The Central Controller was able to allocate MT or HT entirely by requirement. Corps road transport was thus reduced to the minimum without any loss of capability.¹⁹

This theory held good with the frontline relatively static and LR able to operate. When the BEF arrived in France, the ASC had little experience of MT. Lessons learned had been in the field and were inevitably almost entirely driven by the needs of the static situation. Although the back area was a hive of activity, the static frontline allowed for fixed railheads and supply lines. Every officer, except the very few with the BEF in 1914, no matter how skilled, had no experience of mobile warfare!

The German Spring offensive March 1918

When the German Spring Offensive commenced on 21st March 1918, the fragility of the LoC, evolved for static warfare and heavily reliant on the railways, was quickly exposed. LR had allowed the merging of ammunition and supply companies into Divisional MT

[DMT] Companies. Immediately the frontline became mobile, the railways became ineffective due to constant changes of railhead and destruction of the tracks. The DMT Coys had to be divided into two separate units again as different railheads were allocated for supplies and ammunition.

This made administration of the companies difficult and their entire establishment was needed for railhead work. There was no surplus MT available for walking wounded or salving the vast quantities of ordnance and other stores.²⁰

SMTOs were critical of the changes, showing they were understandably too engrossed with their own work to appreciate the agility of the system now able to react to unforeseen circumstances. It needed only a message to divert MT from scheduled work to where they were needed most. Lorries waiting for walking wounded, simply went elsewhere and lorries returning from refilling points diverted to return with walking wounded or salvage.

The German offensive forced the LoC to respond quickly to constantly changing conditions. Initially, supply lorries were able to clear their railheads after completing a day working on extraneous duties. The lengthening distances between railhead and refilling point and increasingly congested roads made anything other than supply work impossible. The value of Haig's foresight in creating GHQ Reserve Companies was soon obvious. As a GHQ asset they could be allocated to plug gaps irrespective of area or role.

The extra workload inevitably caused additional wear and establishments began to reduce as vehicles became unserviceable. Although every MT company had mobile workshops, they took too long to move to be useable as companies changed base almost daily. They never had the chance to carry out repairs. The situation was considerably worsened when 358 Coy ASC (3 Heavy Repair

Shop) was ordered to evacuate their Saint-Omer workshops on 13th April, cutting off the supply of repaired vehicles from that source.²¹

In addition to these difficulties, when telephone communications broke down the only available contact was via a motorcycle despatch rider, of which only one was permitted per MT unit. MT units had to keep in contact with both their division and with Corps HQ, either of which could move at any time, often while the messenger was mid-journey.

Lt Col G.H. Harvey, XV Corps, SMTTO recorded

“The difficulty of intercommunication was accentuated when ammunition ceased to be allotted by the Corps. It now became necessary for units to keep in touch not only with Corps HQ and their Divisions and Trains but also with their Royal Artillery, and on more than one occasion misunderstandings arose which would have been obviated had greater facilities existed for transmitting messages.”²²

The Germans destroyed as much of the rail and road infrastructure as possible during their retreat from August. Whereas railways took weeks to rebuild, roads could quickly be made useable again. Both mechanical and horse transport were flexible enough to negotiate bad surfaces.

The speed of advance of the BEF and the destruction of the railways by the retreating Germans very quickly meant the frontline was forty miles ahead of the nearest railhead. Long distances over poor roads and shortage of spare parts were a heavy burden after nearly two years of struggle. The DT wrote to the QMG

“I should like to bring to your notice the rise in the number of lorries undergoing, or awaiting, repair in the Armies.

For the week ending October 5th 2,606 lorries are off the road, of which 455 were awaiting spare parts, while for the week ending October 19th 3,125 lorries were off the road, of which 582 were awaiting spare parts.

Bad surface of the roads, causing excessive number of road spring failures. In the IX Corps alone, 71 of 224 immobile lorries needed road spring repairs. 30 tons of spring steel have been obtained through the French Authorities in Paris, while supplies from England have been urged to the utmost, but are not forthcoming.

Great distances must be traversed, in some cases Battery positions being as much as 40 miles from railhead.”²³

Railheads changed constantly and refilling points became mobile, often transport only had a rough idea where to find their refilling point. Forty miles today is insignificant, but in 1918 was a minimum ten hour’s duration. MT was working with one driver resting while the other drove allowing the lorry to run for twenty-four hours per day. Heavy rain at the beginning of November made the roads even worse and to add to the problems, 32 DMT Coy recorded that 30% of their drivers were unavailable for work due to the influenza epidemic.²⁴

As usual, when companies were busy, the diaries become very brief and details are scant between April and November 1918. XV Corps provide a retrospective account from May to October.

As a daily average, XV Corps had 630 lorries on establishment, of which 125 were in workshops and 475 used, leaving just thirty spare. From May to July, the lorries travelled 1,688,423 miles which cost, without wages or road repairs, £200,000 [£11,600,000 in 2020]. Total mileage during the six months from May was 3,138,561 miles.²⁵

On 21st September, Fourth Army notified that evacuated vehicles would be struck off the strength at York Road Evacuation Park, Peronne and not on arrival at a Heavy Repair Shop. Until evacuated vehicles were struck off, no replacements could be demanded. It made no difference as no replacements were available and hostilities ended before demands were met. It only illustrates Fourth Army acknowledging the collapse of the railways.²⁶

Some concluding observations

ASC MT mobilised in 1914 with almost no assets and even less experience. After the initial chaos, growth was piecemeal and parallel to the BEF expansion. New units were formed as men and machines became available and attached to new divisions as they were formed. As the workload grew, so did the ASC and the BEF received its supplies.

The Battle of the Somme provided a severe test with the massive increase in munitions, food and medical supplies as the battle escalated and continued longer than expected. ASC MT coped, though was close to breaking point. The men were exhausted, MT worked to a standstill but there was pride, in France anyway, that they had coped.

Lloyd George, who had been Minister of Munitions since May 1915 knew of the impending increase in munitions production. Eric Geddes, formerly Director of Supply, the same. Both witnessed the LoC brought almost to its knees and it was obvious that changes would be needed. Geddes' experience as General Manager of the North Eastern Railway, made him ideal candidate to reorganise the railways, particularly as the static frontline made the railways similar to

civilian networks with fixed routes and railheads.

The roads in front of the railways were the WO's responsibility and while road and rail had to dovetail together, they remained independent. Centralising control of MT gave flexibility to asset management and allowed reductions in men and machines. No organisation likes change, especially when their assets are reduced and the ASC responded with criticism of both WO and railways at every opportunity.

LR failed to meet its expected potential. Hastily laid tracks over ill-prepared ground quickly distorted causing numerous derailments. Soft ground after rain could not support the weight of trains and they sank, rendering them useless. Each failure created additional burden on road transport, particularly during the Third Battle of Ypres.

The German Spring Offensive and subsequent retreat proved the inflexibility of railways. Railways were unable to cope with changing railheads caused by mobile armies. Damaged tracks took days to repair, roads only a matter of hours. Trains were unable to divert around broken tracks leaving them stranded. Lorry convoys simply drove around obstacles. By the Armistice the frontline had advanced to be at least forty miles ahead of railheads. MT had to take on the work of the railways to keep the advancing army supplied.

Two years of reorganising, increasing the railways, decreasing ASC assets had ended with the army at a standstill, waiting for the LoC to catch up. That was the frustration that Lt Col Blamey felt the need to vent that began this article.

¹ TNA, WO 94/1017 – War Diary, 1 ANZAC Corps, SMT0, March Appendix 8.

² TNA, WO 95/625 – War Diary, I Corps, SMT0, 5-8/4/1917.

³ TNA, WO 339/139022 - Service Record, Sir Eric Geddes, 8/4/1917.

⁴ TNA, 95/292 – War Diary, Deputy Assistant Director of Transport, Second Army, 11/7/1917.

⁵ TNA, WO 95/907 – War Diary, XIII Corps, SMTO, 3/8/1917.

⁶ Director of Supplies & Transport – Controller of Supplies & Transport for the BEF, based at GHQ. The Deputy Director of Supplies & Transport fulfilled the same role within each individual army.

⁷ TNA, WO 95/537 – War Diary, Deputy Director of Supplies & Transport, Fifth Army, 12/8/1917.

⁸ TNA, WO 95/71 – War Diary, Director of Transport, 15/8/1917.

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 19/8/1917.

¹¹ TNA, WO 95/71 – War Diary, Director of Transport, 27/5/1917.

¹² TNA, MUN 4/3103 – (Mechanical Transport) Parts for Motors, 14/8/1917.

¹³ TNA, WO 95/4167 – War Diary, 3 Heavy Repair Shop – 15/6/1916.

¹⁴ TNA, WO 95/846 – War Diary, IX Corps, SMTO, 30/9/1917, September appendix 1.

AGM

(continued from page 12)

- Amy Graham and David Holding were duly re-elected as Directors.
- Ian Souter would feed back in due course on discussions being held by the National Transport Trust with bodies such as NARTM regarding 'mobile heritage'.

The meeting was followed by a presentation by Rod Ashley on the life of Dr Rudolf Diesel, which will be featured in the next issue.

October meeting

The Association is pleased to confirm that its next event will be on Saturday 8 October at the Swift Centre in Coventry Transport Museum. The Museum has agreed to waive the new

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ TNA, WO 95/846 – War Diary, IX Corps, SMTO, 31/10/1917, October appendix 1.

¹⁷ TNA, WO 95/71 – War Diary, Director of Transport, 28/2/1918.

¹⁸ GHQ Reserve Coys – Units created for sole use of the Corps to be diverted to wherever the need for extra transport was needed.

¹⁹ TNA, WO 95/846 – War Diary IX Corps, SMTO, 31/1/1918, January 1918 appendix.

²⁰ TNA, WO, 95/817 – War Diary, VII Corps, SMTO, 15/4/1918 appendix.

²¹ TNA, WO 95/4167 – War Diary, 3 Heavy repair Shop, 13/4/1918.

²² TNA, WO 95/931 – War Diary, XV Corps, SMTO, notes on MT, April 1918 appendix.

²³ TNA, WO 95/71 – War Diary, Director of Transport, October 1918 appendix.

²⁴ TNA WO 95/848 – War Diary, 32 Divisional MT Coy, 5/11/1918.

²⁵ TNA WO 95/931 – War Diary XV Corps SMTO, appendix.

²⁶ TNA WO 95/846 – War Diary, IX Corps, SMTO, 21/9/1918.

entry charge. The mechanism for identifying yourself as a conference delegate at the Museum entrance will be advised nearer the date to members who have confirmed their attendance with John Ashley at john@globespinner.net, or by phone to 0770 9900 788.

The conference agenda includes talks by Roy Larkin ('London Buses at the Front: The role of the omnibus on the Western Front'), and Philip Kirk (topic to be advised). There will be a report to and discussion by members of the results of the working party on the future direction of the association by Rod Ashley and Amy Graham.

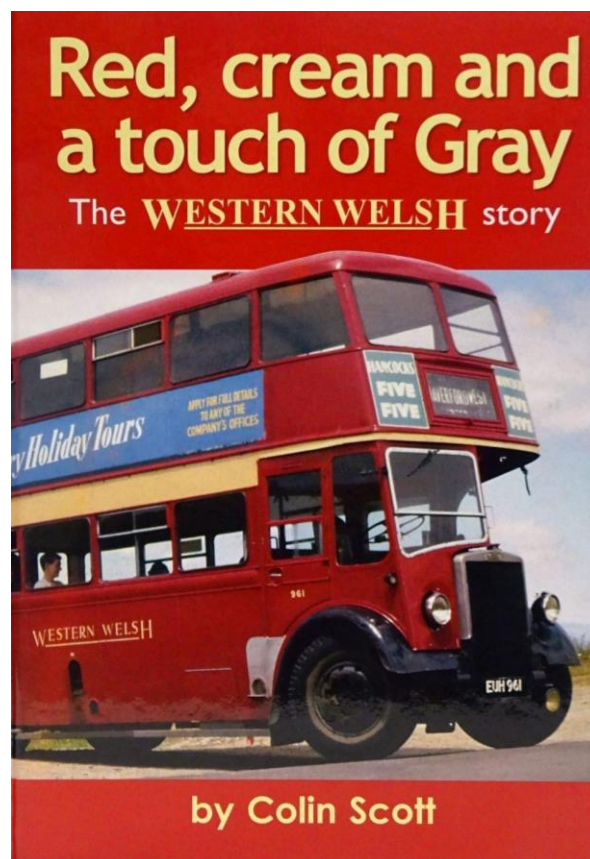
The booking form is being sent separately to members who receive this journal electronically, and as an insert sheet for those receiving it in hard copy.

Book Review

Red, cream and a touch of Gray (2nd Edition, 2019). Colin Scott, Bryngold Books Ltd, 100 Brynau Wood, Cimla, Neath SA11 3YQ. www.bryngoldbooks.com ISBN 978-1-905900-52-7. A4, hard covers, 240 pp, 2019. Price £35.

This is an excellent and thorough history of the Western Welsh Omnibus Company, whose origin can be traced back to 1920 and which ceased trading when it was merged with Red and White Services, to form the National Welsh company, under the National Bus Company (NBC) in 1974.

Western Welsh's history is closely associated with the Gray family which contributed senior managers over the years. Its founder was Albert Gray, who persuaded his employers to set up South Wales Commercial Motors (SWCM), initially as a vehicle dealership but later to operate bus services in South Glamorgan. SWCM became involved with the National Electric Construction Company (NECC) which had an interest in Rhondda Tramways. The Great Western Railway (GWR) had also been active in developing bus services, not least in Wales, and following the GWR (Road Transport) Act of 1928 the GWR and SWCM formed a joint company to operate the services of both. The original plan was that this would be named the Great Western Welsh Omnibus Company, but the "Great" was quickly dropped. In 1931 the British Electric Traction group (BET) secured control of NECC, and from then on Western Welsh became a BET company, albeit with a 50% shareholding by the GWR; former railway staff were deemed to be "loaned" to WWOC and retained their railway conditions of service and Trade Union membership. The business grew to a maximum fleet size of 735 in 1957 following the acquisition of Greens of Haverfordwest.



Above: The cover features this all-Leyland PD2/3; fleet no 961, registration EUH961, which operated from Haverfordwest depot in post-Green takeover days (Greens contributed similar vehicles but this isn't one of them). The location is on the Pembrokeshire coast, possibly Broad Haven. It was new in August 1950.

The author expresses regret at the loss of company archives but nonetheless has assembled material which is often lacking in company histories. In particular each year's financial results (not always positive) are given; he had access to much internal correspondence; and among the wide-ranging choice of high quality photographs are many of staff members at all levels. There is also a separate chapter, again including photographs, showing the company's premises over the years.

A feature of BET group management in South Wales was its reluctance to merge adjoining or overlapping subsidiaries. An extreme example was the six miles between Port Talbot and

Neath where there existed five operating depots belonging to four companies. Both WWOC and Neath and Cardiff Luxury Coaches (N&C) ran between Neath and Cardiff, and WWOC Traffic staff clearly regarded N&C as a more successful competitor rather than a fellow BET group member with whom they should collaborate. There is strong criticism of the successor NBC's decision to close N&C rather than retain it as a brand to be marketed within a larger operation.



Above: About to leave Newport for Garndiffaith on July 17 1935, this 1934 Weymann-bodied AEC Regal 1 572 (KG3606) had recently been renumbered from 262. It survived until the mid-1950s (AB Cross/J Higham collection).

The great strength of the second edition of this book is the inclusion of a new chapter by Lyndon Rees, who had worked with the Rhondda company and then with WWOC until 1968. His contribution deals with a particular fairly short period but has the benefit of providing “inside” knowledge which contrasts with Mr Scott’s sometimes adulatory view of “the wonderful Western Welsh”. He identifies poor relations between the Traffic and Engineering departments, made worse by the then General Manager’s decision to locate himself and the Traffic department away from the head office and works. Vehicle choice was evidently made by engineers on price criteria, leading to poor quality, rather than by the commercial criteria of Traffic. Within Traffic he experienced a generally conservative outlook with a reluctance to consider new ideas.

In particular, Mr Rees finds fault with the company’s response to the challenges of the Transport Act 1968, when local authorities in West Wales declined to provide subsidy for loss-making rural services. He is highly critical of the Traffic Manager’s decision to close all but one of the company’s depots in Pembrokeshire, arguing that more detailed analysis would have identified a viable smaller business, and he expresses surprise that the Traffic Manager was not overruled by his General Manager. The decision increased the anomaly of the “Western Welsh” name for a business which henceforward operated almost entirely in South and East Wales.

The reader will find that Mr Rees’s chapter, while controversial and perhaps contrary to the views of some, provides an insight into company politics which is valuable and rarely appears in business histories; the scenarios he describes will be familiar to many who have worked in similar firms.

Histories of businesses which no longer exist often conclude with a summary of developments after their closure. There is a brief mention of WWOC’s coming closer to Red and White, but the historical text finishes very abruptly without even a date of formal merger. It would also have been valuable to include mention of the factors behind the sudden financial collapse of National Welsh after privatisation and the end of NBC. However, this is a book which will be hugely enjoyed by the company’s former employees and provides material for those with an interest in how transport businesses are really managed.

David Holding

Copy date for the next issue is 6 August

Viewpoints and opinions 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