

Kithead News

Newsletter of The Kithead Trust



In this issue:

- a glimpse at a few of our thousands of BMMO photos
- a bit of propaganda
- an SOS in exile
- Clive King donates the records of a career

The BMMO photo collection

The Kithead Trust has an extensive collection of glass-plate negatives which were commissioned by Midland Red or rather The Birmingham and Midland Motor Omnibus Company to give it its official name. The views stretch from prewar days to 1971 and include portrait shots of named staff and officials, vehicles and buildings. There are also numerous photographs taken when BMMO was a bus manufacturer.

It is a fantastic collection, and rather unusual in that glass negatives were still in use up to 1971. Its value has been unlocked thanks to the efforts of Roger Torode, a name more connected to London Transport but who grew up in Kidderminster and admits to having a lifelong interest in BMMO.

Roger has spent a period of around five years painstakingly scanning the collection and we are most indebted to him for doing this work.

Thanks to Roger, we now have over 6,000 photos digitally captured.

There are many, many shots of buses but a selection of some of the less usual views appear on pages 4 and 5.



Not What it Seems...



This photograph was discovered - framed - amongst the official BMMO photographs in our collection; it's HA registration and SOS manufacture suggests a time-served Midland "Red" machine but it is surrounded by FT and GUP registered buses and "Shop at Binns" was a decidedly north-east phenomenon. We asked Bob Kell, doyen of the north-east preservation scene and long-time Northern General enthusiast what it was all about.

"I hadn't seen this photo before but I certainly recognize the bus. HA 2437 was one of a batch of six 1925 SOS S-type Midland Red open-top coaches bought secondhand from BMMO

by Northern General (NGT) in 1927. They ran as coaches for NGT until 1931 when they were sold to Wakefield's Motors, North Shields for their coaching trade. In 1933 they were back with NGT, HA 2437 now fleet no. 587. 587 and 592 (HA2440) had their chassis lengthened in 1933 and were rebodied as 36-seat buses as you see (Short Bros body). The others of the batch were withdrawn as obsolete in coaching terms.

"587 and 592 were eventually transferred to driver trainers (date not known). Believe it or not, they were used to train the Gateshead tram drivers in 1950/1 - and persuade them that buses had steering wheels! As a result of this photo, a

friend has identified the two people; on the left is a chap called Crawford who was in charge of supervising the preparation and allocation of buses every day. On the right is Mr Markham, who is presumably the trainer but who was perhaps more famous as a coach driver; these were known as "Chocolate Soldiers", perhaps because of their uniforms but they were the elite. The location is Chester-le-Street depot.

"592 went in 1952 but 587 soldiered on until 1955 when there was considerable publicity that it was the oldest bus in Britain to be currently licensed. It was given to Durham County Civil defence Committee and I photographed it in a yard at Pity Me in 1956 where it was overturned regularly to teach staff etc how to get into and turn upright a bus - a sad way to go for such a veteran.

"The bus on the left was one of the original 1931 AEC Regents of Tynemouth & District which replaced the Tynemouth trams. It was rebodied by NCB of Newcastle in wartime."

**Many more BMMO
photos on
pages 4 and 5**

The Clive King Collection

An important addition of Home Counties material



If ever there was a need for a caption competition, this must be it. Clive King (right) is representing Luton & District whilst on the left is industry stalwart John Wilson representing Sovereign. It looks to date from the late 1980s or early 1990s but Clive maintains that he has no idea of the circumstances. Given his well-known faultless memory, we are not so sure....

We have had a further important addition to our collection, this time direct from a respected and long-serving industry professional.

Clive King has recently retired from full-time work at Arriva The Shires, but he has worked with its antecedents for more than 30 years. He witnessed London Country being split into four (when he was appointed Commercial Director of London Country North West), been part of the management buy-out of

that company and its onward sale to employee-owned Luton & District when it was integrated with parts of United Counties. L&D was in turn sold to British Bus which, of course, then became Arriva.

Clive's career has therefore been something of a constant in what has sometimes been a fast-changing industry.

It is therefore a pleasure to take more than 30 boxes of original records into our

collection, including minutes of London Country meetings under National Bus and costings of tendered services for what was then called London Transport in the 1990s.

Clive said "I am delighted to donate these records to the Kithead Trust. The Trust is doing a marvelous job in retaining and preserving industry material and it is something of an honour to have my papers lodged with them."

The BMMO Photograph Collection

- thanks Roger!



Roger Torode

Roger joined London Transport from university. Moving up the ranks in LT, he became Commercial Director of London Forest when London Buses was split into separate operating companies. Roger later was instrumental in the development of Oyster smartcard before being TfL's man in Brussels. Quite a career!

Roger has recently authored *Privatising London's Buses*, based on interviews of a very wide range of people who were involved in the process at all levels - an excellent read of an important subject and highly recommended by everyone at the Trust.

Available at www.mdsbooks.co.uk



Bearwood
Garage



One of the first One Man Operated (yes, they were all men in those days!) cab arrangements on S14 4349 with Setright Speed ticket machine on the right and what is described as a Brandt cash machine on the left – presumably to give change quickly.



Midland Red Choir and Orchestra



Stratford-on-Avon Enquiry Office

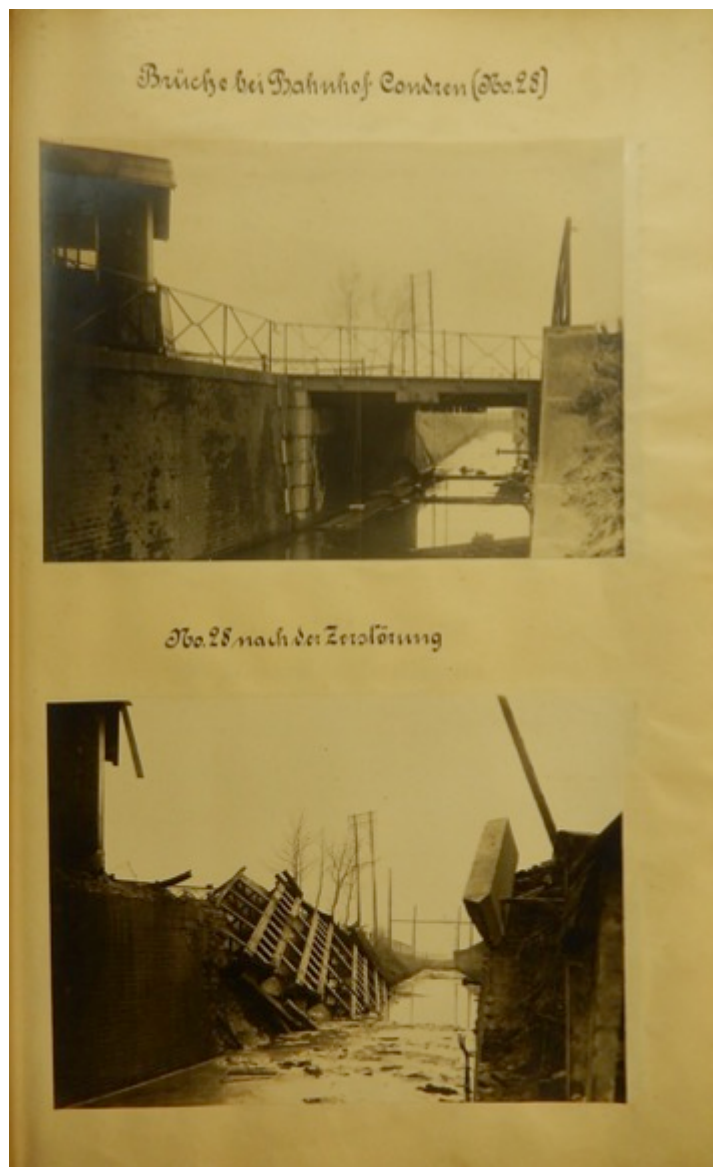


Above: a D9 undergoes a tilt test
Left: a mock-up of the D10 design

Efficiency and Propaganda

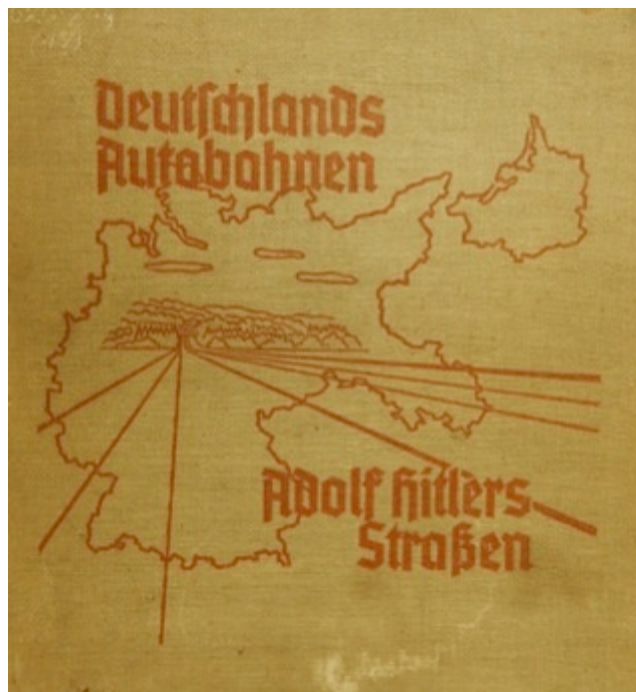
In the 1990s, we accepted the historic library from the Department of Transport (as it then was). It seems that the department had a catholic collecting policy, as many books have only a tenuous connection - at best - with transport.

Here we highlight a couple of volumes written in German. The first is dated 1917 and shows in quite extraordinary detail “before” and “after” pictures of bridges which were destroyed as the army withdrew.



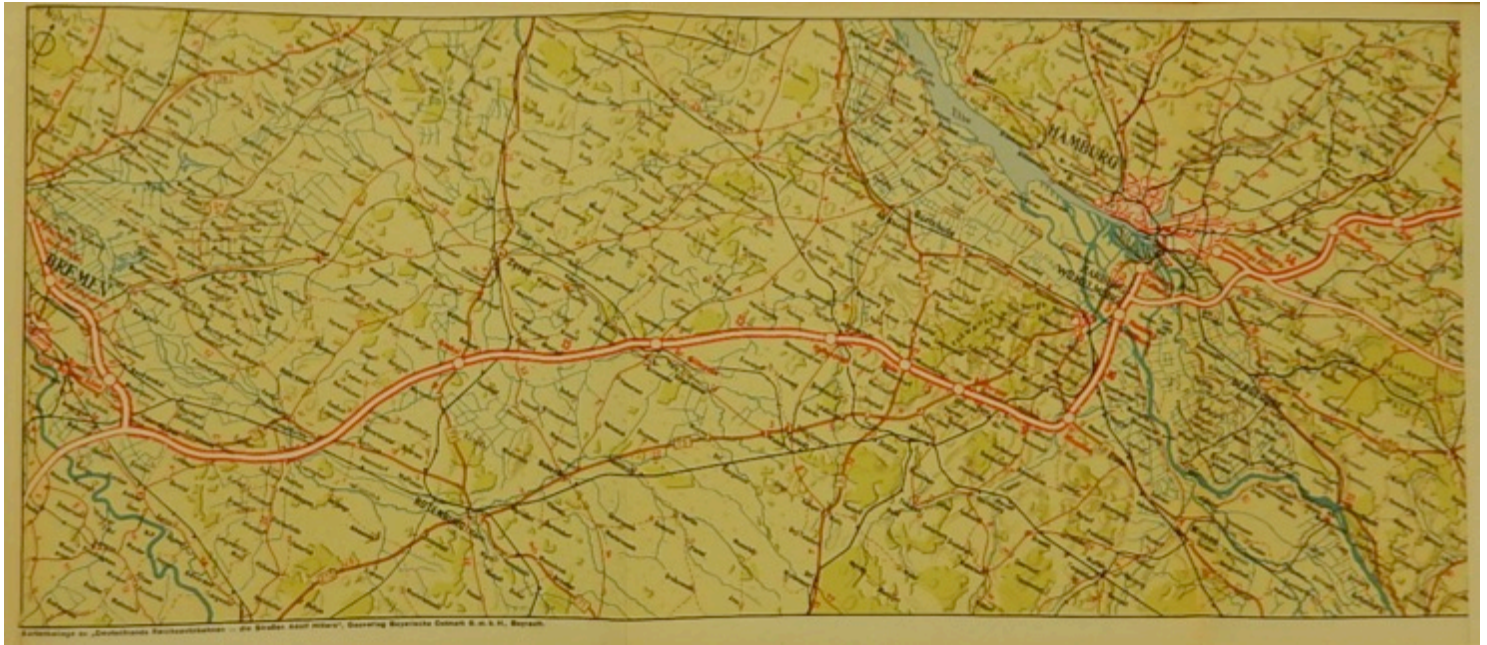
It is entitled “Report for the First Quarter of 1917, by the Third Army Railways Directorate. Items of interest include the demolition of bridges etc., prior to retreat in March 1917, after the First Battle of the Somme.”

The second is a published volume, a propaganda piece which highlights the story of *autobahn* construction in the 1930s (it was published in 1937).

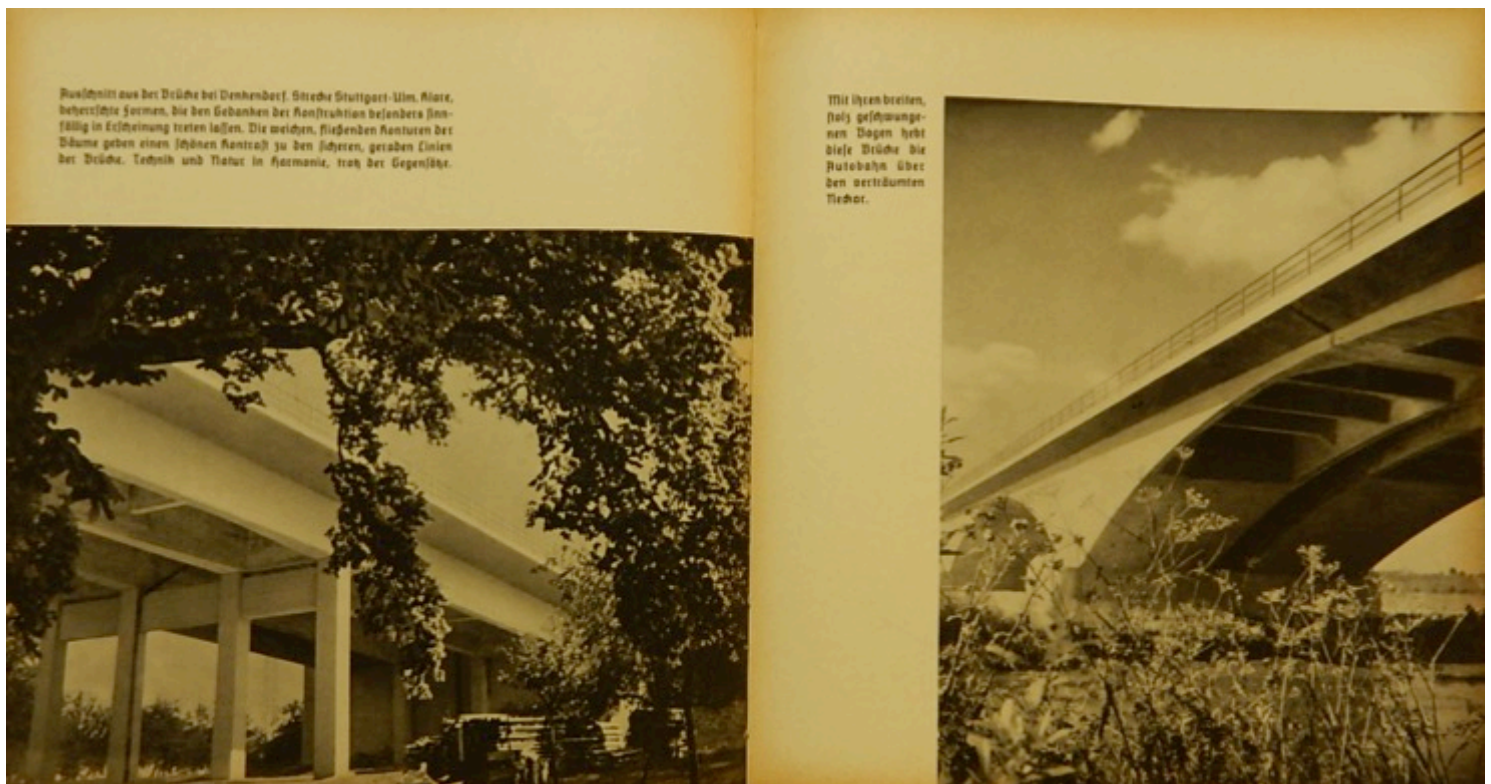


We are constantly reviewing our collections policy, as we have only finite space available and this type of material does not really fit into our collection. However, these volumes are retained as “protected items”, being of curiosity value.

We are in the process of cataloguing all of our books and will be able to place this on our new website, which is now in construction in association with Best Impressions, the top design people.



The Autobahns book is highly detailed with a whole series of maps – this is one example.



The German government were clearly very proud of the huge feats of engineering displayed in the construction of the bridges and other aspects of construction.

Captain's Log

with Archivist Philip Kirk

BMMO change-giving machines and German autobahns – no-one can say that the Kithead collection is not varied!

First of all this time, a huge “thank you” to Roger Torode for his sterling efforts over several years to scan the BMMO glass slide collection. It is remarkable that this medium was still in use in the 1970s and the clarity of the views are all the better for that. We are now investigating how we can make these more accessible to the public.

Roger's work illustrates that we do have projects which can be completed remotely so if anyone is interested in transcribing some Plaxton listings to spreadsheets – please get in touch.

Back at the “coal face” the programme of cataloguing and boxing up our collection of bus industry records continues apace, now with around 1,000 boxes filled which represents (we think) approximately 15% of the collection by volume.

We welcome two new volunteers – John and Stuart – to join our regular band.

Are You Signed Up?

This newsletter is being sent out to our supporters, and anyone who we think might be interested in hearing about us. To satisfy Data Protection requirements, if you would like to receive future editions please register with us, simply by emailing us at hello@kitheadtrust.org.uk with “Newsletter Subscribe” in the subject line.

We guarantee that we will only use your email address to promote The Kithead Trust and we won't disclose it to anyone else.

Notes of Appreciation

This month we received two letters of thanks – the first from Ben Hawkins, who writes: “I would like to thank you all for your help. We had a great day looking through the records. Having spent many days in a variety of archives we were very impressed with The Kithead Trust. Keep up the excellent work!”

And from Anthony Vaughn-Reed, a card which could be said to say it all.



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