

Kithead News

Newsletter of The Kithead Trust



Hot on the heels of the Townsin collection (more of which on pages 4 and 5), we have been very fortunate in receiving the official photograph negative collection of Chas. H. Roe, the Leeds-based bodywork manufacturer. This collection has been carefully conserved by well-known Huddersfield author, preservationist and enthusiast Geoff Lumb to whom we extend thanks.

The collection is a comprehensive and extensive one. There are glass and standard negatives, and some photographic prints. All were taken by professional photographers outside the Roe Cross Gate works and they consist typically of exterior front and rear and interior shots of almost every batch of vehicles built by Roe. The collection starts in 1919 and ends at the close of the 1970s.

As we would expect from professional photographers, the views are excellent: well-posed with a depth and clarity that is admirable. They may lack an “in service” atmosphere but their value lies in the incredible detail which can be indispensable to preservationists and historians. See more on pages 2 and 3.

Also in this issue:

- More from the Townsin collection
- Battle of the Gauges
- Volunteer focus on Bernard Davis



An early product – a van for the “Fresh Fish Service” which ran between Grimsby and Leeds

An early Bristol for Graham’s Bus Service.



An AEC Regent for East Yorkshire with characteristic “Beverley Bar” roof.



(above) a “Dalesman” coach body on an AEC Reliance chassis for then-independent West Riding.

(right) illustrating the centre entrance/exit which was popular amongst some operators in the 1930s is a Leyland Titan for Wallasey Corporation.



The Townsin Collection



In the last issue, we announced that we had been chosen by the family of the late Alan Townsin as the repository of his personal collection. Here, we give further insights into the collection of a great journalist and enthusiast. Alan is seen above being shown into the cab of a BMMO Leyland PD2 (class LD8).

From his collection of papers and photographs, it is clear that Alan Townsin was first and foremost a vehicle enthusiast. Of course, he was following his hobby at a time when information was nowhere near as available as it is today, and the collection shows this. His many notebooks - stretching back to the mid-1940s - are crammed full of details recorded on engine compression ratios, chassis specifications and the allocation of individual chassis to operators.

The notes are made in tiny handwriting in pencil which has

faded over the years. In many cases, the records are invaluable as they give a snapshot of operators at a time when information was scarce. Due to the faded pencil, deciphering the notebooks is proving to be quite a challenge; we are experimenting with scanning the pages and increasing the contrast. It's going to be quite a long and painstaking process.

B1 FPT 45	Bd	SMT(MS)B32F	
32 FPT 153	OWB P	" "	To Maude (B. Castle)
FUP 157	" "	Duple B32F	Ex Crown (N°31)
JPT 725	Bd	Duple C19F	
BCK 330	OB P	" "	Ex Scout (N°32)
BCK 551	" "	" "	" (N°34)
BCK 552	" "	" "	" (N°37)

An example of a notebook entry for observations of Coulson of Rushyford, County Durham.

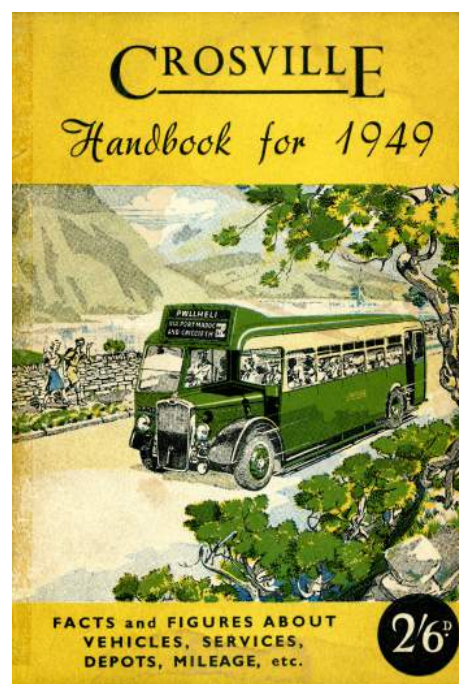
Where information was available from operators, this was seized upon with great gusto. Crosville published an annual guide from the 1940s, which gave a fleetlist, services operated and even statistics such as miles operated and staff employed.

An interesting letter is slipped into one of the guides - a letter from Crosville informing "Mr Townsin" that the 1949 edition of the guide was now available and as he had purchased the 1948 edition he might be interested. Thus proving two things - AAT never threw anything away, and

that direct marketing was alive and well in the 1940s!

Other treasures which are being uncovered are a large swathe of what appears to be the official Park Royal photograph archive; this had been feared lost and gives an interesting counterpoint to the Roe collection (see page 1) as the two were under common ownership for many years. There are also many official AEC photographs, which may fill some gaps in the surviving collection which, we understand, is far from complete.

It is sometimes difficult to decide which items in the collection are there as a result of Alan's journalistic or enthusiast leanings - or



The Townsin Collection

perhaps in the final analysis this simply doesn't matter.

Then there are three charming photographs, showing chalkboard displays at garages of The London General Omnibus Company. The first is from Holloway garage and is a grid showing where each vehicle is parked, and the second, from an unknown garage, shows details of that day's private hires.

Finally, something which may appeal to those who are familiar with the management concept of Key Performance Indicators (or KPIs) - or indeed whose lives may have been blighted by them. There may be small comfort in the fact that the concept is nothing new: Hammersmith garage was displaying accident rates, lost miles and involuntary stops, and also, incredibly, fuel use of the six best and worst "cars". Nothing new under the sun? This is all from 100 years ago....

THE · LONDON · GENERAL · OMNIBUS · COMPANY · LTD.

HOLLOWAY GARAGE

16-5-16

SHED No 2

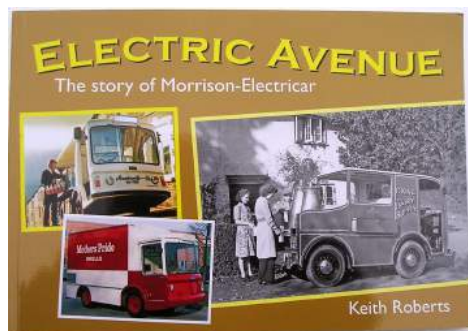
POSITION OF OMNIBUSES

ROW No	BONNET NUMBERS.									
1	524	343	510	991	1818	342	1881	499	1138	522
2	1125	1666	530	717	501	371	1176	376	2037	1117
3	1712	571	1879	1124	922	532	1140	1149	2570	1906
4	526	1137	1817	1129	1157	537	2018	2060	724	569
5		139		1721	1141	1174	3480	513	3481	1722

PRIVATE HIRE		DATE 16 th May 1916	
BONNET NO	DRIVERS NAME	DESTINATION	TIME OUT
M 107	Thorp	London	7-45
44	Brillon	"	8-15
68	Rolfe	"	8-15
103	Horn	"	8-15
72	Burchett	"	8-15
42	Goode	Lingfield	9-0
59	Fry	Salisbury	9-30
76	Haddock	London	12-30
66	Cromwell	"	1-0
96	Grant	"	1-0
46	Noon	"	1-0
L 8	Griffen	"	1-30

THE LONDON GENERAL OMNIBUS COMPANY LTD		
HAMMERSMITH GARAGE		
RUNNING RECORD		
FOR 15 th March 1916		LAST WEEK'S DAILY AVERAGE
ACCIDENTS	NIL	1.2
LOST MILES	NIL	NIL
INVOLUNTARY STOPS	NIL	1
6 BEST & 6 WORST CARS ON PETROL CONSUMPTION		
6 BEST		6 WORST
L 23		L 21
24		28
25		36
29		55
69		56
70		57

Electric Vehicles – a new book by Keith Roberts



One of our readers, Keith Roberts, has produced a book, 'Electric Avenue', the story of the Morrison Electricar.

It tells the story of a company which was once the largest manufacturer of electric vehicles in the UK.

As Keith says, "Battery electric vehicles played a large part in the history of commercial road transport, but this is rarely covered in the media." Keith himself worked in the industry.

The book is available direct from Keith at 2 The Causeway, Sketty, Swansea, SA2 0SX, and is priced at £10.99 plus £2 postage.



Volunteer Focus on... Our Man in the Media (Room) Bernard Davis



As regular readers will have seen, we have several significant collections of photographs, which are being added to constantly.

These need specialist storage and handling, and volunteer Bernard Davis heads this up.

Bernard has had a long career in the bus and coach industry - starting with London Transport in 1964, before transferring with its country area operations to the newly-created NBC subsidiary London Country Bus Services in 1970. This was followed in 1983 by a move within NBC to its London-based marketing arm London Crusader

and then to National Express, finally as Marketing Director. After leaving NX Bernard worked with The TAS Partnership on the Transport Industry Monitor series of publications.

Says Bernard, "I find the photograph collection fascinating, with its large number of glass plate negatives. We have significant holdings from West Midlands municipals, plus the huge Midland Red collection and now that of Charles Roe.

"There is a marvellous collection of high quality glass plates covering 100s of railway locomotives from the 1930s and 1940s. There are also smaller numbers of pictures from many other bus operators. My personal favourite is the marvellous pre-war coachbuilt publicity vehicle of Victoria Coach Station shown below".



A Right Royal Follow-Up

In the last edition, we showed a letter proclaiming that the Aldershot & District Traction Company had received a Royal Warrant, and wondered how this might have come about.

Reader Stephen Jolly, of the Oxford Bus Museum, emailed to say:

I think it would have been for carrying Army personnel and probably a 'Royal' in uniform to/from the Aldershot Military Tattoo which was a 'big thing' in those days (like the RAF flying at Hendon Air Shows and the Navy Days in the Royal Dockyards).

<http://www.britishpathe.com/video/aldershot-tattoo>

This 1924 clip shows a WW1 Whippet tank!

Britain on Film

Whilst on the subject of films available online, make sure you look at the BFI initiative *Britain on Film*, which seeks to place amateur and professional 'documentary' films online.

<http://www.bfi.org.uk/britain-on-film>

As a taster, savour three minutes of glorious 1920s vehicle types at:

<http://player.bfi.org.uk/film/watch-york-poor-childrens-fresh-air-fund-off-to-filey-1925/>

Wiser heads than ours actually place the date as 1929 rather than 1925 but that certainly doesn't distract from the spectacle.

Did Tilling Stevens B9As produce quite so much exhaust smoke?

Railway Corner with Tony Jones

Battle of the Gauges

George Stephenson built his first locomotive, THE BELCHER, for Killingworth Colliery in 1814 and decided on a gauge of 4ft. 8ins. This was based on the centuries old measurement of 5ft. 0ins. distance between the wheels of horse drawn carriages. He then allowed 2ins. for the width of each rail making a gauge of 4ft. 8ins. After gaining experience a half inch was added to reduce friction between wheel and rail thus arriving at the standard gauge of 4ft 8 ½ ins.

This gauge was used by the majority of railways which were built in the 19th century, except of course for the Broad Gauge of 7ft 0.1/4ins. introduced by Brunel for the GWR. Brunel persisted until finally defeated by the gauge commission in the late 19th Century. The commission decreed that the "narrow gauge" of 4ft 8 ½ ins should become the standard and that has prevailed not only in the UK but in many countries worldwide.

Signalmen

In the days of manually operated signal boxes the signalman was often referred to as "The Bobby". This term derived from the fact that in early days a policeman was posted at each rudimentary signal post to operate the disc. This was usually done on the "time interval" process which basically worked on the principal that if a train had past more than five minutes ago it was safe to let another one through. Not always a safe procedure!

As we know the police force was invented by Sir Robert Peel and the term Bobby referred to policemen. Hence over the years the name transferred to railway signalmen.

The trust is always keen to add to its collection of railway material - please get in touch.

Captain's Log with Archivist Philip Kirk

This edition of Kithead News is rather bus photograph-heavy but we make no apologies for that. The team is hard at work cataloguing and digesting both the Townsin and Roe collections, and the newsletter is very much an account of what's going on in Droitwich.

Our volunteer team is now 15-strong, and we focus this time on Bernard Davis, who is topping off a successful career in marketing, particularly in the coach industry, with looking after our extensive media collection. We are always keen to attract new volunteers - both those who can get to Droitwich and those who live farther away. For example, the Roe collection is meticulously and neatly catalogued by hand in a series of notebooks. That's great as we know exactly what we have, but our aim is to have this list available to potential users online. To do that, the information needs to be transcribed onto spreadsheets. If you are interested in doing some of this task, please let me know.

In his regular Railway Corner, Tony Jones makes a call for any railway material which may be out there - we have just had a deposit of some modern railway papers (details next time) but we are always keen for more!

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Request Corner

Well-know bus historian Paul Lacey writes:

"I am preparing a book on Smith's Luxury Coaches of Reading and seek photos of their vehicles (but not those in the white livery era) taken away from the usual local haunts, particularly at coastal and other destinations, on UK or Continental tours. Any items loaned will be promptly returned."

If you can help Paul, please contact him direct at: 17 Sparrow Close, Woosehill, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG41 3HT or on paul.lacey17@btinternet.com

If you have a particular item you have been searching for, we can publish your request in Request Corner. Just email us at the usual.

Why not pay us a visit?

We are open Wednesdays and Thursdays each week from 10am to 4pm (and some other days and times by arrangement).

Please book your place in the Search Room by emailing hello@kitheadtrust.org.uk

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