

LEEDS TRANSPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWS SHEET 181

MAY 2015



FORTHCOMING L.T.H.S. MEETINGS & EVENTS

Meetings at Richmond Hill Community Club, Railway Street, Leeds, LS9 8HB, 1930 for 2000

- Mon. 11 May **Woltersdorf Tramway, Berlin**
Richard Buckley
- Mon. 9 June **More Leeds buses of 50 years ago from the USA**
Ian Dougill
- Mon. 13 July **An evening stroll down part of the trackbed of the Middleton Tramway**
led by Eric Smith
Meet 7.15 p.m., junction of Bodmin Rd. & Ring Rd. Beeston Park; finish at the Dewsbury Rd. end of Middleton Grove. Distance on foot approximately 1¾ miles. Start and finish points are both served by buses 2, 9 and 64.
- Tue. 21 July **Evening Visit to Heaton Park Tramway, Manchester** (Note change of date). Transport and meeting arrangements will be announced at the June meeting and sent out by e-mail.

OTHER LOCAL MEETINGS & COMING EVENTS

May

Tue.12 (LRTA) **Trams & More Trams** Mel Reuben

June

Tue. 2 (MRT) to be advised

Tue. 14 (LRTA) to be advised

July

Tue. 7 (MRT) **150 Years of the Hunslet Engine Company**
Don Townsley

Tue. 21 (LRTA) Heaton Park visit, joint with LTHS

Groups, Meeting Places & Times

MRT Middleton Railway Trust, The Engine House, Moor Road, Hunslet, 1930. No charge, refreshments on sale.

LRTA Light Rail Transit Association, Committee Room No. 5, Civic Hall, 1900. collection £1.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Jamie Guest, Hon. Secretary

As you will know we had our Annual General Meeting in April. This is normally the only relatively formal business meeting that we have each year and this one was, on the surface, no different. However it was quite historic in many ways.

As usual we had the Minutes of last year's meeting circulated and approved, along with the Secretary's and Trustees' Reports and the annual accounts. After that, however things were very different.

As you will be aware, we have been trying to change the charitable status of the Society to become what is known as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, otherwise a CIO. This gives important protections to the Committee members and the Society.

Over the past few months the Committee has been working to get new organisation set up and registered with the Charities Commission. On the 11th February this process was completed and a new charity, still called The Leeds Transport Historical Society, was formally registered with a new charity number of 1160446. The Committee took the decision to wait until the AGM to make the formal changeover, otherwise we would have had to have another Extraordinary General Meeting.

Anyway to get back to business, a motion was then put forward to dissolve the LTHS and transfer all its assets to the new charity. This was passed unanimously and the new charity came to life.

We then carried on with the normal business of an AGM, mainly the election of a new Committee who act as charity trustees. As Stephen Longthorpe had decided not to stand for re-election due to increasing responsibilities both at work and with a young family, he was warmly thanked for serving as Vice-Chairman. Happily he will continue his valuable role as Sales Officer. In the subsequent election, we were pleased that Mel Reuben was elected which ensures that the former Leeds Transport Touring Group are represented on the new Committee.

The meeting finished shortly after 9 p.m. and I was hoping to do a presentation showing pictures of the various events that the LTHS had taken part in over the past year but my new laptop decided to refuse to talk to the projector, so we ended up with a good sociable chat.

Since the AGM we have had another Committee meeting. To demonstrate that this is just a new chapter in the life of a long established society we decided to restart the Committee meeting numbering with 501 and the Minutes with item 2099, the highest number ever carried in service by a tram in Leeds, Feltham 501 first appearing in Leeds livery with its original London number.

In practice we do not anticipate that the change of status will make any difference to the way that the Society runs but we look forward to making it work on behalf of the membership.

[N.B. the official Minutes of the AGM will be published with the 2016 AGM notice]

BRIAN PARKIN - POSTSCRIPT

Malcolm Hindes

First of all, some corrections to our reports in the last News Sheet. Brian’s sons are Andy and Stuart, not Stewart; the hymn played at the funeral was “Thine be the Glory” from Handel’s Judas Maccabeus. Our thanks go to Tony Cowell and Andy Parkin for spotting and confirming this and our apologies for the mistakes. Not to be outdone, the TMS Journal posthumously promoted Brian to “President” of LTHS. Nobody told us (or Brian) about that one! The LTHS, of course, does not have a president.



First Group have named a bus - Volvo B9TL 37674 - in Brian’s memory. This bus is repainted in Yorkshire Rider livery, apparently the first of several to appear in heritage liveries. The name BRIAN PARKIN is carried above the door on the nearside and above the driver’s



cab window on the offside. Members of Brian’s family and local enthusiasts were met by First Group staff at Hunslet Park garage on 17 March when the bus appeared from the paint shop.



SPOT THAT TRAM - some answers

Thanks to Eric Smith and Chris Thornburn for some quick detective work, we have some answers to the posers in our last issue.



Horsfield 167

Roundhay Road was suggested by Chris Spring, and Eric confirms this. It is definitely at the bottom of Roundhay Road, by Sheepscar junction. On the extreme right is part of a window of The Victoria pub (8 Roundhay Road), then the building with the arched windows is Nos. 10-14. Cross Wingham Street is behind the tram.



Horsfield 236

Tong Road? No. Horsfield 236 is on Armley Road, inbound, at Abbott Street (thanks again to ETS). The Scarbro Hotel is visible immediately behind the tram. The tall building with a ventilator in the end may be part of the Castleton Foundry. There was a Post Office at Abbott Street, which probably explains the pillar box on the left.



Feltham 574

What idiot suggested Great Wilson Street? (Don’t tell

me). Chris Thornburn pinpointed this as Harper Street. The gable end and tower of the abbatoir are visible above the tram. The corner building with the rounded windows has gone with the widening of New York Street but the rest of the shops still exist, refurbished as the Crowd of Favours café bar.



Leyland PD1 328

This photo was maddening for so many people who thought it familiar but couldn't quite place it. The bus actually is travelling north on Spence Lane as most thought, approaching Whitehall Road (the modern day "Dunelm Mills" warehouse is on the right). The familiar building on the far left is Maenson House, the premises of May & Son in Springwell Street, the last three letters of "Maenson Clothes" being discernible on the roof (no doubt placed so as to be visible from passing trains). The Thrift Stores immediately behind the bus was at the bottom of Spence Lane but the ornamental building beyond the roundabout is the long gone Volunteer Inn at the junction of Holbeck Lane and Domestic Street, not the former Yorkshire (Penny) Bank which is still standing on the opposite corner and is just visible above the road sign in front of the bus.

Chris Spring fell into the same trap as so many of us: "Regarding bus 329, on my copy of the photo, which may be a little clearer than the one I sent, there is a road sign that shows a roundabout (behind the two Ford Consuls) with two minor roads going off left, then a main road leading to A61 Wakefield, A64 York, and I think A639 Castleford. I wonder if the bus is in Spence Lane and has crossed Whitehall Road at the roundabout. That would seem to mean the buildings left of the bus are in Whitehall Road".

More "Spot that Tram" next issue.

CHARLIE'S COLUMN The "Baker Torpedo" Disaster

Charlie Watson

As there is so much talk of electric cars these days, it's worth looking back to 1902 and a disaster that tram lines played a major part in.

In Cleveland, Ohio, the Baker Motor Vehicle Company was founded in 1899 by Walter C. Baker and specialised in building electric cars that were so good even the King of Siam ordered one. But Baker had one abiding ambition - to break the world land speed record in an electric car of his own design. By 1902 the "Baker Torpedo" was ready. It was a wooden tube covered in oil cloth, 18ft. long and on 36" wheels. Packed inside were 40 batteries which could propel this "freak" up to 130 mph.

Baker and his mechanic took the car to the Automobile Club of America speed event held at Staten Island Boulevard in New York. This was a big event and during the day 24 motor cycles and steam cars broke record after record. But all that the large crowd wanted to see was the "Torpedo".

Eventually it was Baker's turn, but tragedy was only moments away as he set off along the mile long straight.

At the junction of Lincoln Ave and South Boulevard the event organisers had covered the tramlines with "a heavy layer of loose dirt". The previous competitors had knocked most of this out and the last few had bounced over them. Suddenly the "Torpedo" appeared. The New York Times of June 1 1902 takes up the story.

"It was like a torpedo striking the water on leaving the tube of a battleship but it was apparent, even to the most inexperienced, that there was something the matter. The racing machine was not keeping a straight line ... but swerving from side to side.

The fraction of a second before the machine struck the rails it moved in a straight line. Then it made a leap in the air like a deer shot the heart when in full flight. It turned to the right, straight for the greatest number of the crowd. The machine swept to the left in a wide circle and tore up the left bank, throwing people into the air as it swept them and the small trees before it and then stopped, the two wheels on the right hand side being torn to pieces."

At least one spectator was dead - another died in hospital -and several were injured. Baker and his mechanic survived by having racing belts fitted to the car, which had reached 80 mph before the crash, thereby making Baker a record breaker.

Was it worth it? Maybe so, but I doubt the spectators that day would think so ...

(with thanks to the New York Times)



To prepare us for the walk on 13 July, Eric Smith provides a fascinating account of the Middleton tram route

THE MIDDLETON LIGHT RAILWAY

Eric Smith

In 1919 Leeds City Council was authorised to extend its boundary to include land at Middleton for housing of the Garden Village type. Its tenants were to be people displaced by the demolition of insalubrious houses.

No roads connected Leeds with Middleton, but eventually the city's new Ring Road would arrive there. The construction of a light railway was also authorised in 1919. By May 1921 a temporary standard-gauge railway had been built to take building materials up to Middleton. By 1923 the Ring Road had been partly completed. Eventually a very limited bus service started.

The temporary railway was discontinued in June 1923. Would the tramway now be built? Houses had already been occupied by working people who previously lived near their place of work. These early residents were faced with a walk of almost 1½ miles through the Park and down Gipsy Lane to the tram terminus in Dewsbury Road outside Tommy Wass's farm (or was it already a pub?)*.

Early in 1924 a decision was made to construct the tramway. It would be an express sleeper track about three miles long, starting from the Middleton Colliery's coal staith alongside Hunslet Moor, running alongside the historic Middleton Colliery Railway before climbing through the fields of Lockwood (or Ward's) Farm, continuing through the woods of Middleton Park, emerging to run alongside a piggery and open land to the Water Tower. The final stretch to Middleton Arms was alongside Middleton Park Road.

In 1925, less than three months before its opening it was almost complete but the authorities had yet to decide which of the three options to choose to link it to the rest of the city's tramway system! Eventually was built a connecting track - street track in Moor Road where it crossed Hunslet Moor - to link the Light Railway with Dewsbury Road at the "Junction" pub.

So, the first passengers were carried from the Corn Exchange loop on 12th November 1925. The line was extended to Lingwell Avenue on 26th November 1927. On 28th August 1949 it was joined, by a fourth extension of the Balm Road route, to create a circular service. This wonderful tramway closed on Easter Saturday, 28th March 1959 after thirty-three years and nine months. The circular route had only operated for nine years and seven months.

What remains to be seen? - about a third of it. A few yards of Moor Road and Hunslet Moor can be seen, but the Coal Staith site is buried under Junction 4 of the M621 which also covers the trackbed to a point beyond Parkside. You can still walk on a section starting from behind the former Parkside Cricket Ground as far as the curve beyond the former Cuckoo Steps bridge (dual levels) over the two railway tracks.

From there to the entrance to the woods the contours of the area were greatly changed by opencast coal mining in the early 1980's.

the trackbed through the woods, being inside the Park itself, remains unchanged, but on leaving the woods and the Park beyond the "sub-station" and site of the crossover it disappears under holes 10 to 18 of the golf course, which is itself currently under threat. This is the municipal golf course, not to be confused with the private South Leeds Golf Club not far away, which straddles the Ring Road.

Beyond the end of Town Street and the Water Tower the site of the tramway can be easily seen to the left of Middleton Park Road and Ring Road Middleton, although in some places it's hard to decide exactly which grassy stretch covers the remains!

When reaching Belle Isle Road, the central reservation is easy to spot. But then, the Balm Road and Belle

Isle route is another story!

Route Numbers From 1926 to October 1929 trams with number screens showed 16 for the service from the Corn Exchange to Middleton. From October 1929 cars showed number 12.

Before Christmas in 1935, 1936, 1937 & 1938, to ease traffic congestion the No. 12 was moved from its terminus at the Corn Exchange No.1 loop to temporary loading points near Swinegate. From October 1939 the permanent boarding points were in Swinegate and at the foot of Mill Hill as trams on routes 12, 25 and 26 ran round a unidirectional loop (Swinegate → Neville Street → Great Wilson Street). Later some were 27. From August 1949 some trams showed 12 CIRCULAR and 26 CIRCULAR.

From 22 July 1956 to closure on 28 March 1959 trams to Middleton were linked to the York Road routes thus:

Crossgates (18) - Kirkgate - Middleton (12, 12 CIRCULAR)

Middleton (26 CIRCULAR) - Belle Isle (27) - Belle Isle (26) - Balm Rd. (26) - Kirkgate - Central Bus Station (26, later 27 too) - Harehills Lane (17) - Halton (20) and occasionally Templenewsam (22)

For more information about the construction of the Middleton Light Railway and the Ring Road please consult Jim Soper's wonderful history, pages 338, 356 & 357 (Leeds Transport, Vol.2) - but note that the photograph on page 356 shows the Middleton line under construction as it crosses Farmer Ward's fields!

*An article in the Yorkshire Evening Post of 13 October 2007 reports:

The Tommy Wass Hotel was originally a farm before becoming refreshment rooms and ultimately a public house. Asa and Stephen Wass were owners – Asa lived nearby at Beech Cottage. The pub is named after their father, Thomas, who was born in 1832 in Morley. In 1927 the premises were known as the Alice Doidge refreshment rooms and the first licensee was Clement Leach.

The Leodis website reckons the place dates from the late 19th century when it was a farmhouse on a 64-acre farm run by its namesake Thomas Wass, the son of Stephen Wass, a wheelwright and carpenter from Easingwold. Thomas, apparently, married Rachel Oades-Broadbent – a farmer's daughter – and they began married life at a farm in Gipsy Lane, before moving into the building that's now the pub but was, at the time, a substantial farmhouse. They had five daughters – Mary, Charlotte, Hephzibah, Annie and Amy – and three sons – Oliver, Asa and Stephen. Asa took over the farm after Thomas's death in 1887, followed by Stephen. The land on which the property was built belonged to the Church commissioners and there was a covenant imposed in the deeds to prevent the making, storage or sale of alcohol.

In later years Bridge Farm, as it was called, became known as the Refreshment Rooms when it was used as a changing room etc for the local church cricket and tennis clubs. After the death of Asa Wass in 1924, the building was eventually purchased by Melbourne Brewery Company, when the covenant was released. As the farm had always been known locally as Tommy Wass's the family gave consent to continue the name when it opened as a pub in the late 1920s. Ed.

Contributions of news or articles for News Sheets are always welcome and may be submitted to the News Sheet co-ordinator, Malcolm Hindes, at 34 Moor Park Villas, Headingley, Leeds, LS6 4BZ, e-mail malcolm.hindes@btinternet.com
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