

LEEDS TRANSPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWS SHEET 178

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2014



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

The 2014-2015 season is upon us and members should find the new programme enclosed/attached.

Meetings start 7.30 for 8.00 p.m. prompt on the second Monday each month at the Richmond Hill Community Club, Railway Street, Leeds, LS9 8HB.

Mon. 8 Sept. - Leeds trams and buses from the USA Ian Dougill

Mon. 13 Oct. - Leeds from the Top Deck
Jim Soper
(Preceded by a short E.G.M.)

Mon. 10 Nov. - More Historic Films from the Archives of the National Tramway Museum Roger Benton

Mon. 8 Dec. - British Buses Mike Waring

OTHER LOCAL MEETINGS & COMING EVENTS

Please give these local groups your support. Without a decent attendance they can hardly justify continuing. Remember - Use it or lose it!

Please contact the News Sheet coordinator with details of other local events which may interest members.

September

Tue. 9 (LRTA) Focus on PCCs - America's Successful Tram

Mon. 15 (LTTG) Laurel & Hardy Comedy Evening

October

Fri. 3 Light Night Leeds featuring Manchester 173 on display in Briggate (see article overleaf).

Tue. 7 (MRT) Scouting on the Right Lines
Colin Walker

Thu. 9 (NGRS) Railways of the Czech Republic
Mike Swift

Tue. 14 (LRTA) to be advised

Mon. 20 (LTTG) Mike Waring

Sat. 25 -Sun. 26 Leeds Model Railway Society Exhibition, 1000-1700 (1630 Sun.), £6.
Grammar School at Leeds, Alwoodley Gates
(LTHS Sales Stand - volunteers, please)

November

Tue. 4 (MRT) West Yorkshire Railways in the 1980s (Part 2) Kevin Tattersley

Thu. 6 (NGRS) India 1977 John Holroyd

Tue. 11 (LRTA) Leeds Trams Remembered
An Annual Evening of Nostalgia

Mon. 18 (LTTG) to be advised

December

Tue. 2 (MRT) Christmas social quiz - not too difficult! Team Dobson

Thu. 4 (NGRS) Archive Films David Charlesworth

Tue. 9 (LRTA) to be advised

Mon. 16 (LTTG) A.G.M. members only

Groups, Meeting Places & Times

MRT - Middleton Railway Trust, The Engine House, Moor Road, Hunslet, LS10 2JQ, 7.30 p.m. All welcome, no admission charge. Refreshments on sale at half-time break.

LRTA - Light Rail Transit Association, Leeds Area, Committee Room No.5, Leeds Civic Hall, 7.00-9.00 p.m. (room collection)

LTTG - Leeds Transport Touring Group, at Grove Inn, Back Row, Holbeck, 8.00 p.m. £1

NGRS - Narrow Gauge Railway Society, Yorks. Area. The Epicentre, Meanwood Valley Urban Farm, 7.00 for 7.30 p.m., room collection £2 min.

EDITORIAL

Malcolm Hindes

Once again we have to apologise for the late production of this August News Sheet.

Unlike last year, when we had the excuse of the heady events of the launch of horse car 107 to report, there is no great deal of news to report. More significantly, unexpected delays and last-minute changes in finalising the programme of meetings (which members should find enclosed or attached) meant holding back. No less significant were contributors' holiday arrangements.

Your Committee has met several times recently to consider important matters for the Society including revised proposals for changes to the Constitution; there will be a short Extraordinary General Meeting prior to Jim Soper's show on 13 October to explain and consider these matters.

On a brighter note your News Sheet coordinator (me) has been delighted to receive a number of articles of interest to use as the "tailpiece"; indeed a further article from Eric Smith came through the letterbox whilst this issue was being prepared (Thanks, Eric). This month we feature another of Chris Youhill's tales from his days at Samuel Ledgard's.

SUBSCRIPTIONS Tony Cowell, Hon. Treasurer

The £10.00 membership subscription became due again from all members on 1 September.

Payment will be welcomed at the next Society meeting or by post (cheque to L.T.H.S.) to A. Cowell, 3 Windmill Rise, Aberford, LEEDS, LS25 3EW. For a receipt by post, please enclose a stamped addressed envelope. Alternatively, acknowledgement can be sent electronically via e-mail.

Members should note that details of membership are held on a data base. Anyone, should they so desire, can be removed from the list. Their status as a member will, of course, remain unaffected.

A TRAM VISITS LEEDS

Malcolm Hines

The LTHS was closely involved with an event in Morley on 2 August to commemorate the centenary of the start of The Great War in 1914.



Courtesy of the Manchester Transport Museum Society, Heaton Park resident Manchester 173 was decorated as a recruiting tram for the Leeds Pals and loaded on to a lorry in appalling weather on Yorkshire Day prior to travelling across the Pennines to be displayed in Windsor Court. Needless to say it had to be well sheeted over for protection from the elements! Following its return to Manchester, 173 played a similar role in the Trans-Lancs Rally at Heaton Park on Sunday 7 September (with the decorations suitably modified, presumably).



[Photos by Andrew Waddington & Jamie Guest via British Trams Online]

AND RETURNS!

Gareth Prior

For the first time since 1959 a tram is going to visit Leeds City Centre, as part of the Light Night Leeds event on Friday 3rd October. The tram which will be making the trip to Leeds will be Manchester 173, the second time this tram will have crossed the border into Yorkshire within a few months, and is another cooperative project between the Leeds Transport Historical Society and the owners of the tram the Manchester Transport Museum Society. Light Night Leeds takes place across the city centre and features various projects involving light including images being projected onto public buildings. A Latvian artist, Anna Politiko, who grew up to the sound and sight of trams in Riga, has come up with the idea called "The Ghost Tram" which will see images of tram passengers from the 1920s and 1930s projected onto the windows of 173 which will be parked in Briggate. The plan is that Manchester 173 will make the move across the Pennines on Thursday 2nd October and will

then be parked on Briggate in the performance area between Commercial Street and King Edward Street. Several projectors will throw the images onto the inside of the windows, which will be specially coated for the event. The actual art installation will be visible during the evening of Friday 3rd October and 173 will then make the trip back home to Manchester on the morning of Saturday 4th October.

The last trams ran up Briggate in March 1959 when the service to Roundhay was withdrawn. The last trams in Leeds City Centre were the ones of the final closure procession on 7th November 1959 and although there were further movements of preserved trams in Leeds out of Swinegate Depot in 1960 none made it into the city centre.

(Mel Reuben reminds us that 602 returned briefly in the 1970's for an exhibition in the Queen's Hall)



Chamberlain 96 in almost the exact location where Manchester 173 will be found on 3rd October. Matthias Robinson on the right is now Debenhams.

[Text from British Trams Online, photo LTHS]

SALES STANDS

Our Sales manager, Stephen Longthorpe, continues to ensure we get representation at events.

We had stands at the Middleton Railway's model railway exhibition on 5-6 July (yes - it did coincide with Le Grand Départ!), at the Sandtoft Gathering later in July and at the Morley event (see above). The next sales stand will be at the Leeds Model Railway exhibition at the Grammar School on 25 & 26 October. Volunteers are always welcome, but please do let Stephen know (Tel. 07818 041 483, 0113 305 0576 or email Stephen.Longthorpe@wypte.gov.uk) so you can be planned in (expect to have to pay the £6 admission charge if you don't!).

NGT STILL TRUNDLING ON **Malcolm Hines**

Despite being intended to last just a few weeks, the New Generation Transport Public Enquiry has proved so lengthy that it had to take a break for the summer. Those with internet access can listen to audio of the proceedings at <http://cosmiclaire.blogspot.co.uk>.

NEWS SHEET DISTRIBUTION

M.H.

Members who receive their News Sheet by email should receive this as soon as it is ready. Printed copies are normally distributed at the next monthly meeting, after which postal copies are sent out. Opt for email and you will get first sight as well as saving the Society over 50p a copy. Send me an email and I'll add you to the list!

THOSE VERY SPECIAL PARK ROYAL "HGFs"

By Chris Youhill

Here are some happy reminiscences from personal experience on a class of Daimler vehicles which hold a very special place in Ledgard history. During 1953/4 no less than twenty four London Transport Daimler CWA6s were purchased. Two of these, GYL291 (Brush) and HGF805 (Duple) are not part of this account. The remaining twenty two Park Royal bodied "HGFs" were from the famous class of one hundred Daimler CWA6 buses which entered service between May and November 1946 and spent their entire London careers at Sutton Depot (A) in Surrey.

The HGFs were wartime chassis and had Park Royal bodywork to what was known as "relaxed" utility specification incorporating many standard London Transport features, this being no small part of the fascination of the batch. They were very presentable looking vehicles indeed but poor unseasoned timber in the body framing often led to quite extensive repairs being necessary, particularly at their first major overhaul with Ledgard. When first acquired they were pressed into service with the minimum of necessary attention and it is true to say that almost every one was prepared in a different way as early photographs clearly show, although on all twenty two the enormous three piece rear destination equipment was removed and neatly panelled - these clumsy displays had been so oversized as to necessitate a shallower top deck emergency door which remained an obvious identifying feature throughout their days.

Interior painting was initially in numerous varied patterns often involving "stippling" or pseudo graining to the window surrounds. Lower panels were generally in dark blue and ceilings would be white or cream. One startling exception was the first to enter service from Otley Depot, HGF 913. The panels were blue, the lower halves of the window frames (to the "London Transport" join) were a rich maroon, and the remainder was a startling white. I shall never forget one very noisy and uncouth passenger boarding the nearly full bus as it left Ilkley - looking around in amazement he bellowed "Huh, what's this then, red white and blue for the ruddy Coronation?!" !! Well, the year WAS 1953 I suppose.

Of course the first HGFs arrived shortly after Mr. Ledgard's demise and different experimental new liveries were appearing frequently. Sadly it was obvious that the traditional scheme of blue and white with green roof and dark blue bands was to be modified in varying degrees. Countless combinations of dark and light blue, black, green and white were tried on the HGFs and each was interesting and acceptable in its own right. The newly adopted lettering in "big company" style of block capitals, with large initial "S" and final "D" in the underlined fleet name, was applied to all the London Daimlers. The first arrivals received an incredible variety of treatments to the front destination displays, practically every possible way of masking the three glasses being tried and old small rolls from many withdrawn buses being fitted. Most of these destination blinds were of the prewar pattern and occasionally one from an old coach would be used and in fact 897 had perhaps the weirdest of all, this being from Willowbrook coach GUA 900 and being tailor made for that vehicle's shaped glass, involving the top edge of the lettering drooping away to the right - a very odd sight indeed !! Soon, however, the larger standard display which was to survive until 1967 appeared, first editions having smaller lettering on three lines - "via" taking up a third of the space - but the printing size and layout was progressively improved on subsequent versions and ultimately looked very professional. No HGF was ever fitted with a destination blind over the platform, but many had the large single glass occupied by paper advertisements for the Company's excursion and private hire activities.

I daresay a booklet could be written about all the multitude of individual body alterations which took place over the years but these cannot be detailed here. Initially all the half drop windows were retained, including those in the windscreens on both decks, but these were often subsequently removed as necessary, and those on the sides were frequently altered to sliders made "in house" to use that infuriating modern expression. Not quite all of the buses were rushed into service with urgent haste and in fact four of them were treated first to what had the makings of a fair standardisation programme. These vehicles were 888/907/908/914. They were very competently fitted with excellent platform doors and rear emergency exits, and the front displays were properly re-panelled to show "LEDGARD" painted in the top London box and a new correctly sized glass in the centre beneath to accommodate the new larger destination blinds. 891 and 897 received similar treatment at first overhaul. Only one of the batch suffered a really short career, succumbing very early to serious body deterioration, this being 940. As a young conductor I can clearly remember the alarming sideways movement in the entire framing as we travelled along and it was to serve Ledgard's for only four years. I look on it as the "Cinderella" of the Sutton Daimlers.

Much has been written about the role that these buses played in helping the Company through a very worrying period, and there is no doubt at all that their perfectly adequate performance and almost total reliability on arduous, hilly and very long services were instrumental in enabling Ledgard's to recover to a splendid standard long before 1967.

Several special memories of the class occur to me just now. Firstly those wonderful full length bell cords in the lower saloons. Like many people I had always imagined that these had been a standard fitting in the Capital from very early days, but not so - the HGFs were the first London Transport buses to be so fitted. Also while the lower saloon cord and buttons rang a tuneful bell in the cab, the sole button at the top of the staircase worked a powerful buzzer mounted beneath the top deck wooden floorboards - a beautiful sound not to be forgotten !! Then we had the single skin ceilings in the upper saloons - the top brackets for the vertical handrails were simply rivetted into these, often leaking, and icy weather and almost universal smoking were very prevalent in those days. The sight of all the rusty condensation droplets, impregnated with pure nicotine extract, dripping on the passengers - and me!! - is something I'll ne'er forget. In the cab the starter switch was the familiar London Transport "coat hanger" above the nearside window and a solemn notice, in London's chosen Gill Sans lettering, warned DOUBLE DECK HEIGHT 14'6". The rear number plates were set rather nearer the centre than usual, which gave the buses an unmistakable identification feature for those who had just missed them !! They had just one occasional nasty habit though for the unwary, in common with all buses fitted with spring operated pre-selector gearboxes, and this was their "Achilles Heel" - quite literally !! If any degree of play should develop in the linkages between the gearbox and the selector lever on the steering column then woe betide any driver who failed to position the lever correctly or to fully depress the gearchange pedal. He would suddenly experience the pedal flying out under full spring pressure far further than normal, often resulting in painful injuries as the ankle was rammed against the seat adjusters or other sharp objects.

Most of the batch had commendable but uneventful careers but perhaps a few notable exceptions are worth mentioning. The standard London overhaul practice was to separate chassis and bodies for refurbishment and the same two were rarely reunited. The one hundred HGFs were not treated in this way, however, normally being dealt with as complete vehicles. There was just ONE exception - that was 910 which had swapped bodies in London with 900 (not a Ledgard machine). Rather more dramatic was 948 which did not enter service complete with Ledgard. The Park Royal body was used to replace the Duple one on Ledgard's own JUB 649 -creating a fascinating vehicle - while the London chassis received the heavily rebuilt coach body from CUB 1 (a Maudslay SF40 of 1935 !!). Another inexplicable little detail concerned 957 which, together with 955 - also not Ledgard, had been built with deeper louvres over the top deck windows than the other 98 buses in the production run. Sadly 949 was once the innocent party in a horrendous fatal crash on Otley bridge late one Saturday night when it was hit head on by an overloaded motor car. It was quickly repaired though and was always a good machine.

Just in closing these reminiscences, about every vehicle in a batch being an individual, I must mention the complete contrast with the next machines that we had from London in 1963/4/5/6. When the thirty four RTs and five RTLs arrived every one was prepared for service in an identical and smart manner, producing an incredible degree of standardisation. Wonderful machines they were without a doubt, and fondly respected and remembered, but for me they just hadn't the spirit and the magic of the HGFs - I have a great and lasting admiration for "THE SUTTON DAIMLERS."

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 or, e-mail malcolm.hindes@btinternet.com
All statements and comments are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent Society policy.

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