

Road Transport Services in Purley and Pangbourne

An account of the development of coach, carrier and bus services in
the Parishes of Purley on Thames and Pangbourne in the Royal
County of Berkshire

by

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Preface

This small booklet arose from work done by both Project Purley and Pangbourne Heritage Group. While Purley's bus services are far more extensive than Pangbourne's as Pangbourne has the added benefit of a railway station, virtually all the buses serving Pangbourne also serve Purley.

Over the last hundred or so years we have gone from virtually no public transport to an extensive service which went into severe decline alongside the rise in the private motor car. However in many areas there is a resurgence of bus travel as people become more conscious of green issues and the rapidly increasing costs of private transport.

This booklet is concerned mainly with the transport of people but it was felt worthwhile to divert into some of the other earlier services which dealt with goods as it was from these operations that bus services developed. The author has neither the expertise nor the inclination to dwell upon the different types of buses that have operated in our area although there are plenty of passing references.

There are many people to thank for help with the information but none more so than Paul Lacey, whose histories of early bus services in the area and that of the Thames Valley Traction Limited have been invaluable sources.

One great regret is the paucity of good photographs of buses taken in the Purley and Pangbourne areas but I remain grateful to Cecil Aldin who lived in Purley and who provided excellent sketches of early forms of transport although they are not possible to place geographically.

Chapter 1

Ancient Travel

The road system of Britain developed because people wanted to go from one place to another and needed to carry goods with them. The route followed depended to some extent upon the terrain but more upon the way that people thought at the time and the technology that was available to them.

Ancient man kept to the high ground so that he could see well ahead and avoid being waylaid. It was also much easier ending a journey downhill than uphill. Roads tended to be special purpose, in that a particular group of people would have their own routes and other groups used quite different routes. Thus one can trace drovers roads which were broad and could accommodate a herd of cattle or flock of sheep, and narrower roads used by salt merchants with pack horses.

The Romans were not too worried about being waylaid and drove their roads straight from one point to another. The points where they were able to ford or bridge a river would often modify the route taken but the general trend was quite definite. They developed a well defined road system for military use with fine metalled roads for wheeled vehicles.

The Saxons were much more sparing in exerting energy. They preferred to follow contours and avoid obstructions so their roads appear to wind aimlessly from one village to another. They adopted many of the ancient and Roman roads where it suited them but did not bother to do anything about the road surface. If it got too muddy or a tree fell they simply went around the problem and created a new path.

In the Middle Ages there was lots of movement, both of people and goods, mainly on foot or using horses either to ride or as pack horses.

There had been wheeled carts from very early days, but only during the Roman period were they able to move relatively freely. Carts in the Middle Ages were very heavy with large solid wooden wheels and required several horses or oxen to drag them along.

Wheeled carriages, known as Whirlicotes, were introduced in the time of Richard II (1377-1399). They still needed several horses but did provide an alternative to horseback. As time progressed however larger wheels with spokes and iron tyres were developed together with rudimentary springs to soften the jolting and jarring as the vehicle moved along.

Chapter 2

Horses

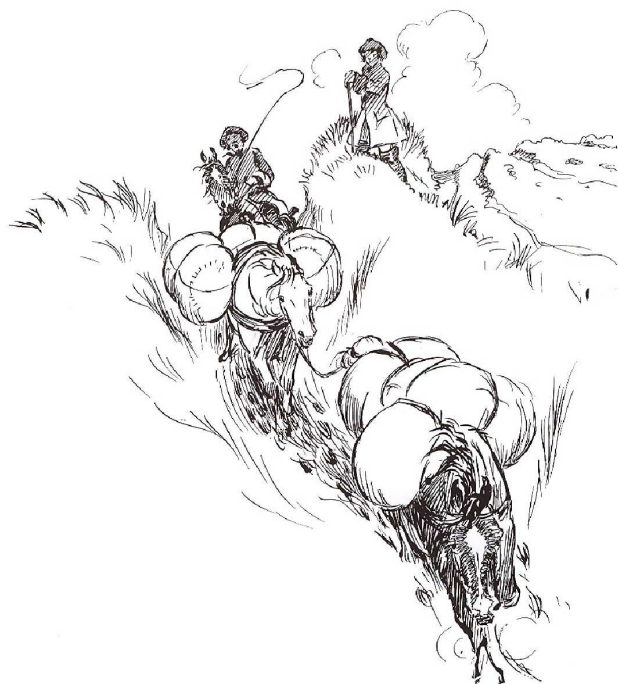
For most purposes horses were the only animals available to help society move around and transport goods. For some of the heaviest work oxen were often used and for the lighter work there were mules and donkeys but it was the horse that predominated and we will use them as the principal motive power. Dogs and reindeer were also used but in very rare circumstances.

There were three ways of employing a horse - riding it, using it to carry goods or to pull a wheeled vehicle.

Pack Horses

Pack horses were the most popular method of transporting goods over long distances. A merchant might have a string of up to twenty horses, each equipped with a pannier in which the goods could be carried. They would be roped together and they wended their way across country following well trodden routes.

The amount of traffic was such that the horses' hooves dug into the ground and cut deep defiles creating narrow sunken roads. Where the route crossed the brow of a hill the defile produced a characteristic notch which could be seen for miles.



Pack horses cutting a defile into a ridge

A merchant tended to specialise in one type of commodity and established his own distribution routes from the source of the commodity to its ultimate destinations. On return they used to bring goods which could either be traded en route or which were needed by those who produced the principal commodity. Thus there were merchants who plied between the Cheshire salt mines and places all over England, or between the Cotswold woollen mills and the sea ports, bringing in return spices, wines, spirits and any other goods which could be easily carried and sold for a relatively high price in his home town.

We have no specific records of such merchants serving the Purley / Pangbourne area but there must have been some.

Riding Horses

Most middle or upper class people owned their own horses and had a stable attached to their house. These were alright for short local trips but if they wished to go any distance they either had to proceed very slowly with plenty of rests for the horse or by hiring horses as they went.

Along the main roads there developed a series of staging posts where horses could be left and new ones hired. The horses were owned by the inn keepers or by a local business man and a horse used to spend most of its time between its owner's stable and neighbouring stage posts. Only if there were no other fresh horses available would one be sent too far from its home.

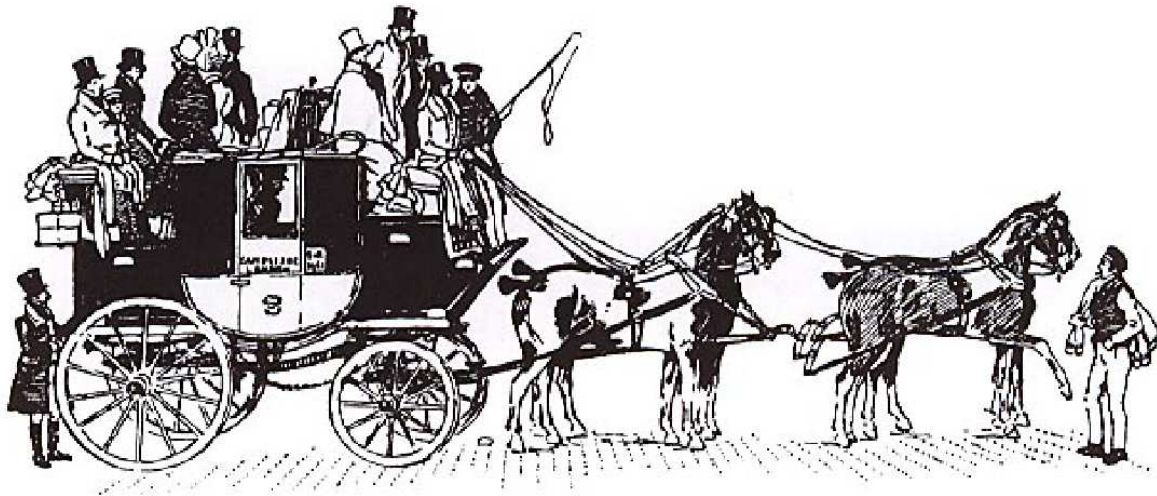
The posts tended to be about twelve to fifteen miles apart but this could be much shorter if there was a severe hill in between. They tended to be the same posts for both riding purposes and for hauling coaches.

As well as being used as a personal transport system, there grew up a considerable network of messenger services. These were the forerunners of the later postal services and initially were run on an ad-hoc basis - The Royal Court used them extensively but the universities, guilds, nobility, city and town councils and many other groups all had their own messengers which used to travel around the country carrying letters and packages for their masters. In later years these

messenger services were timetabled and often used to carry messages for others and exchange at the Inns in the larger towns.

Coaches

Coach services started in Tudor times usually by the simple process of adding bench seats to farmers carts or waggons. By the middle of the seventeenth century the traditional stage coach had developed with seats for four or six people inside and space for boxes and packages to be carried on the roof or in a trunk strapped to the back.



Coaches carried people on top

Other passengers could be carried on top, but it was both very uncomfortable and very dangerous. Many people fell off having been numbed by the cold or from dozing and it was not uncommon for passengers to be brushed off by the branch of a tree.

The coaches would be hauled by teams of from four to eight horses which were changed at each staging post. Every effort was made to reduce the time the coaches had to wait and, especially where mail coaches were concerned, a complete team could be changed in a few minutes.

The Carters

For heavy goods there were the carters. These used large waggons drawn by teams of up to twenty heavy draught horses or sometimes oxen and plied long distance routes, usually specialising in a small number of basic products such as timber, coal, agricultural goods. Such was the state of the roads that even with a fairly light fall of rain they could be mired down in the mud and when the roads were



A Road Train pulled by 8 heavy horses (Cecil Aldin)

badly cut up and there was torrential rain or snow progress was next to impossible. As progress tended to be very slow anyway and the teams were so specialised, the same animals were used throughout the journey. These services were rapidly replaced by canals from the 18th century.

Chapter 3

Local Coach Services

Before the formation of the Reading, Wallingford and Shillingford Turnpike in 1763 there must have been coaches operating along the route as in part of the founding Act there are references to the existing highway noting how inadequate it was for coaches to pass. It stated that the road was in ruinous condition, narrow in many places and incommodius to passengers'

The Universal Directory of Trade in 1796 gives perhaps the most detailed information of the local coach services. 'A coach to Oxford sets out from the Broad Face Inn, in the Market Place, every Monday and Friday mornings, at eight in the winter and nine in the summer; returns from thence every Tuesday and Saturday afternoon about four: passes through Purley, Pangbourne, Near Whitchurch, Basselden, Streatly, Moulsoford, Wallingford, Shillingford, Dorchester, Newnham, Sandford and occasionally through Abingdon to and from Oxford. Fare, insides 6s, outsides and children half price: proprietors, Mrs Norris and Son.'

A Reading to Oxford Coach left the Wheatsheaf in Reading every Monday and Friday in 1801 via Wallingford, departing at 9 am and returning the next day

Adey operated a coach between Oxford and Reading in 1802-4 from the Boars Head, Butchers Row, Reading departing at nine am on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, returning at the same hour on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from Oxford.

In 1823 a service was started between Highworth, near Swindon and London via Faringdon, Wantage, Wallingford and ran from the White Hart in Reading to Highworth three times a week taking one day to get there and another to return. It connected at The White Hart with a coach operated by Daffern and Co which went on to London. .

The service seems to have a somewhat chequered history. By 1829 it was reduced to a weekly waggon run by Adey which left from the White Hart, Broad St on Thursdays going via Compton and Ilsley . In 1840 it was back to a daily coach service but by 1844 with the

coming of the railway it was again a weekly waggon run by Adams from The Angel on Fridays.

In 1823 there were two services daily between Reading and Oxford via Abingdon. One was named the Royal Dart which left the George Inn at eight each morning. The other was split into two different services known as the Dart and the Hero. The Hero came down from Oxford on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, stopped at the George and continued to Brighton via Odiham, Guildford, Horsham and Heckfield. It returned on the following day. The Dart operated on the other days merely between The Broad Face Inn at Reading and Oxford. .

In 1830 Hone was operating two coach services daily between Reading and Oxford via Pangbourne, Streatley, Wallingford and Dorchester. The 'Dart' left Hone's office in Reading at 8 am each day except Sunday and the 'Horn' left at 5 pm. (ref 482). In 1834 the 'Dart' was running through to Cheltenham. In 1836 these services were operated by R Costar and Company with licensed coaches 7208 and 7209. These both carried four inside passengers but whereas no 7208 carried eight outside, no 7209 was licensed only for five. Also in 1836 a daily service between Wallingford and Reading and return was operated by W Hone. It was licenced coach no 7220 and carried four passengers

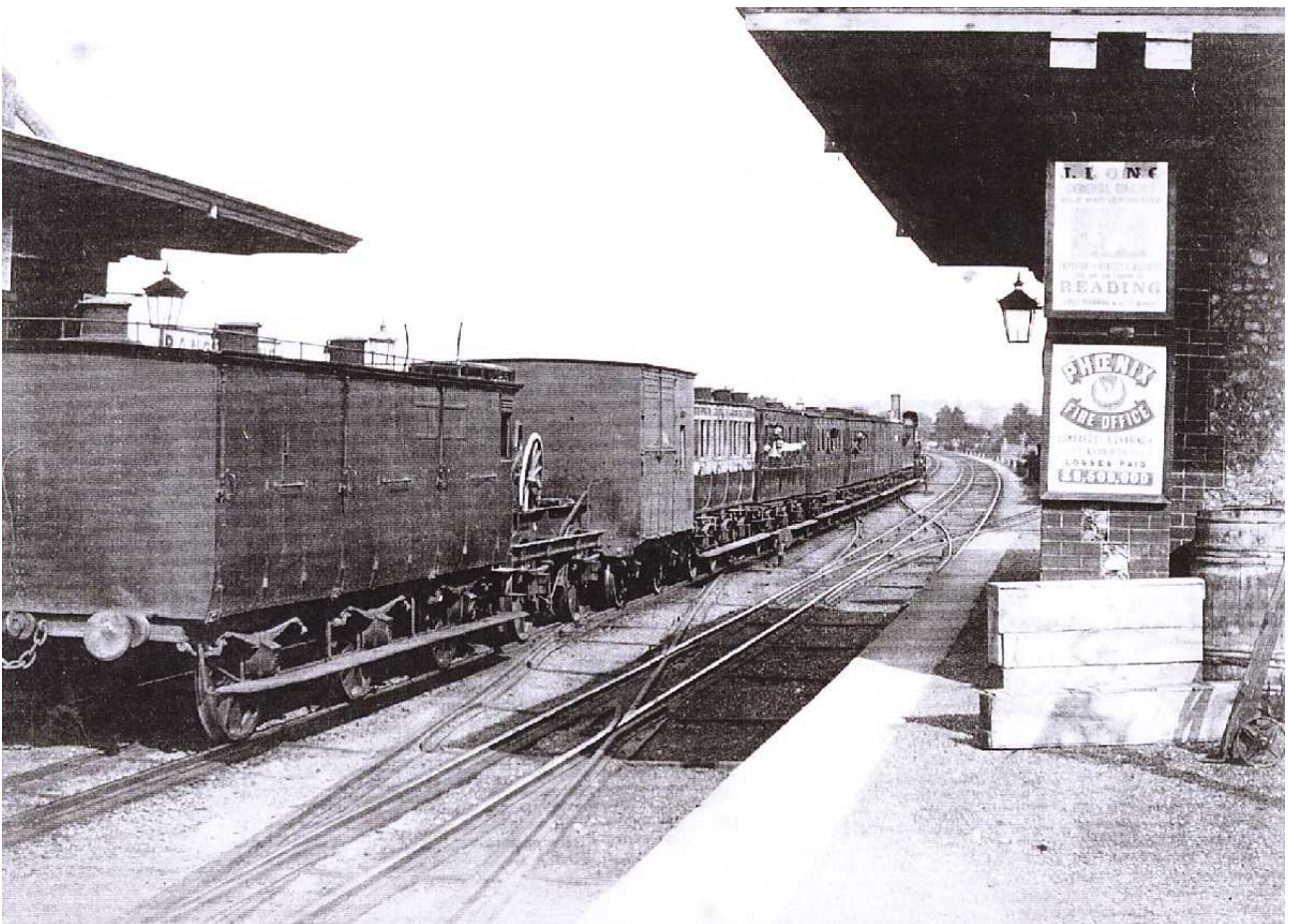
In 1840 there were coach services from Pangbourne to Brighton (three days a week); to Highworth (daily); London (daily); Oxford (twice daily); Portsmouth (3 days a week); Reading (twice daily). The London coach came along the Bath Road as far as Theale and then diverted via Pangbourne Station to board the train for Reading and Paddington with the coach carried on a special flat truck and the horses in a horse box. This seems to have been 'The Regulator' which operated from Bristol to London. The Brighton and Portsmouth services came from Oxford and Wallingford

A variation on the stage coach was the Sociable. This was a four wheeled open carriage with facing seats. They were used for the shorter journeys and in 1830 there was a service which left the Angel in Broad St every morning at 7.45 am travelling via Pangbourne and

Streatley. .In 1834 the service left Hone's Coach station at 11 King St, Reading at 11 am. . In 1840 it was back to the Angel being run by Mr Pook leaving at 7.45 am and returning in the early evening.

The coaches reached their peak around 1836 which was maintained until 1840 when there were no less than 14 daily coaches from Reading to Bath and beyond, 15 to London, most of which piggy backed on the railway and 17 to other destinations from Brighton to Devizes. A number of the services were sociables.

The coming of the Railways was the death of the stage coaches, providing a faster, more comfortable ride. As the railway stretched westward the coaches used to divert to stations and 'piggy back' on the trains to and from London. To facilitate this a special siding was installed on the north side of Pangbourne Station and special vehicles were built - one a flat truck to carry the coach and the other a horse box to carry the horses. but eventually this practice soon died out and the passengers simply transferred to the train. The railways soon took over all the long distance traffic and the local connecting trips were served quite well by Local Carriers.



A passenger train at Pangbourne c1860 with a coach and horsebox between the first class coach and the guards van - A Henry Wilder photo

Chapter 4

The Carriers

Carrier services were probably started by people who needed to travel to market anyway and carried goods for others. Thus the service often began as a side line for someone like a farmer, an inn keeper, or a local shopkeeper. They go back a long way in time to earliest mediaeval days.

In general the carriers did not address the same markets as the merchants with their pack horses and the carters who carried bulk goods. The merchants tended to deal in one type of commodity and travelled comparatively long distances whereas the carriers carried a very wide range of goods and travelled fairly short distances, rarely more than twenty or thirty miles.

By the mid nineteenth century a well organised carrier network had been developed linking almost every village with at least one major town. The carrier operated on a weekly basis starting and finishing at his home village. Each day he would travel to a nearby market town, following a pre-defined route and stopping off to take orders, collect and deliver goods as he went. Occasionally they also carried people. There was usually an easily recognised marker to indicate that he should call, often a white flag or card.

It was possible to send goods considerable distances by carrier as they used to meet each other and the carters at the inns and alehouses where they operated from in the major towns and swap goods. The carters operated over very much longer distances for example in 1830 Hillier and May operated a wagon which travelled from Swindon and Friday returning the next day. There were many carts to London but also to Southampton, Andover, Bath & Bristol, Devizes, Frome and Odiham.

The tradition was that the goods were paid for on delivery and thus the carrier would have a very real interest in ensuring that the goods arrived safely. How they paid each other when goods were passed on was a matter of negotiation and depended very much on trust; but any carrier who cheated his colleagues would very soon go out of business as no one would trust him in future.

Carriers were subject to no controls and no bureaucracy, they kept no accounts and dealt strictly in cash. Thus they left no written records and all we really know about them is culled from lists of their names and routes in local directories. Really the only restriction on them was that they were not allowed to carry mail, but even this they got around by bundling mail up into parcels or by doing deals with local postmasters.

In the market towns the shopkeepers used to give them commission, usually a penny in the shilling for goods they bought on behalf of clients and they levied a charge on the client as well. The vehicles they used were usually covered two wheeled carts drawn by a single horse but many carriers had a variety of vehicles for different uses, eg bulk carriage, coal delivery, funerals, weddings or agricultural use.

In the twentieth century many of them bought either petrol or steam lorries and changed their line of business by becoming haulage contractors or bus operators. The larger operators also used traction engines to haul trailers. These used to do a lot of damage to the roads and put undue stresses on bridges and so before long they were required to obtain a licence for their vehicles to help pay the cost of maintaining the roads.

The old carrier system lingered on until the 1940s but after the war most of them went out of business. In recent years, however, there has been a considerable revival with many companies operating national carrier networks using vans and motor cyclists.

The earliest record of a carrier in Purley and Pangbourne is when Godwin started his route between Reading and Streatley around 1790. He had an unofficial arrangement with the Reading Postmaster which became official in 1811 when he was engaged as a Post Office Messenger at a fee of 20s per week.

The route was taken over by Feather in 1817. He was taken to task by the Post Office for carrying passengers at the same time as mail in 1825. This was strictly forbidden. In 1829 the route again changed hands when Piercey took over, working from Alfred Street in Reading. Piercey was still operating in 1840, but in 1843 Mr

Kidney took over from him, operating from the Friar Street Office.

In the 1850s there were three carriers serving Purley. The principal service was provided by Kidney and Vise who operated daily between the Woolpack Inn in Reading and Whitchurch via Pangbourne. In addition Mr Tegg ran from the Peacock on Wednesday and Saturday and Mr Smith from the Elephant on Saturday only.

Carriers would serve mainly their own and a few surrounding villages and not bother to stop very much en-route. However business was business and they would always be prepared to stop and call if they had the time and the space on their cart. In 1870 the list of carriers that passed through Purley at least once a week, often daily was impressive; Pike, Butter and Jane Woodley served Ashampstead; Hannah Hobbs & Mary Pottinger and Moses Saunders served Basildon; Butler and Shepherd served Blewbury; Charles Watts served Cholsey; Pickett, Compton and Ilsley; Hudson, Wantage and Faringdon; Francis Lawrence and Daniel Simmonds, Goring; Jesse Wallis, Wallingford; and Butler and William Neale served Yattendon and Pangbourne.

At the turn of the century services were provided by Smith, Taylor and Agg. Smith operated from the White Hart in Reading on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from at least 1891 to 1920. Taylor from the Dukes Head daily (1891), and Agg from The Elephant daily .

In 1931 Baston of Upper Basildon, Cripps of Bucklebury, Galpin of Yattendon, Lee of Horseshoe Road, Pangbourne and Nash of Pangbourne operated through Purley. In 1930 Mr Lee operated daily, except Wednesday, between the Forbury in Reading and Pangbourne.

By the war there was only Mr Lee left with a covered Ford lorry with two benches in the back. He brought supplies to and from the shops along Purley Rise and local farms. He also took the older children to school in Pangbourne and the local football team to away matches. He was a bluff Yorkshireman with a thick accent which made him almost unintelligible to the locals.

Chapter 5

Background to the Bus Industry

Bus services evolved from four major sources: the carriers, the railways, municipalities and the coach-builders. Many carriers mechanised their services usually by first acquiring a lorry to replace the horse and cart, then putting seats into it and later acquiring a specialist vehicle. The railways found the use of connecting buses an easy means of getting total coverage of their territory so that in conjunction with other railways they could offer a nationwide transport system for goods, parcels and people. The coach builders also began services to employ and promote the vehicles they were building. Local councils entered the scene in major towns, often supplementing or replacing tramway systems or horse drawn omnibuses, but usually enforcing strict regulation to exclude other operators within their boundaries.

At first most bus services outside the major towns were privately owned. In the 1920s there was intense competition between the bus operators but after the 1930 Act many went out of business or amalgamated with rivals. By the second world war there were a small number of very large groups operating under the guise of local companies. Of these the Tilling Group was the most relevant to the Pangbourne / Purley scene as they owned and controlled Thames Valley. This group had also absorbed most of the services started by the railways which were operating under the banner of Western National (Ex GWR), Southern National (Ex SR) and Eastern National (ex LNER) Other former railway services were merged into local Tilling subsidiaries.

After the war the 1948 Transport Act forbade the railways from operating bus services. The major groups retained a measure of independence, although ownership transferred to the British Transport Commission, until they were fully nationalised and merged into the National Bus Company in 1968. But otherwise by the mid fifties there were virtually no private buses.

Following the formation of the National Bus Company there came an explosion in the number of the private coach operators who were not

allowed to run stage services, but, starting from scratch, soon came to rival the nationalised carriers in many parts of their market, such as private hire and contract work. Regulation of bus services, which had started in the 1930's to address the problems of road congestion and unbridled competition, was used to keep private operators out of the stage bus services market. In the 1980's however a change of political climate saw the end of regulation and the selling off of most of the nationalised buses to private hands with municipal bus companies forced to operate as free standing companies rather than departments of the town hall. One of the odd consequences of this activity was the formation of some very large bus groups which, as transport undertakings, were ideally placed to take over rail franchises when they were privatised and to date they virtually dominate the rail services with First Group running most of the local rail services.

Over the hundred years or so that have elapsed since bus services began there have been dramatic changes in the design of buses and in the way bus services have been operated. Tramways had been established in the urban areas from the 1860s and were originally horse drawn, but towards the end of the 19th century were rapidly converting to electricity. Most of the trams in England were double deckers and this formed the basis of the design of later urban buses. Rural buses on the other hand came from the transition from farm waggons to steam lorries which had seats placed in them to form what is usually described as the 'toastrack' bus, whereby each row had its own pair of doors on either side in contrast to the double deckers which required passengers to board at the end with a central gangway. When this design was adopted for buses however it was found that too many bridges were not high enough and so a variant was devised known as the low-decker which had the upper gangway on the right side of the bus with long bench seats to the left. In this way the overall height could be reduced by about eighteen inches which was taken from the seated passengers on the right hand side of the lower deck.

The single decker went through several phases, initially the driver sat in a cab completely isolated from the passengers and with a conductor to take the fares riding along behind. In rural areas however the

concept of one man operation came in fairly early and manufacturers, especially Bedfords produced buses with the driver seated by the front door to collect the fares as well as drive. It was a long time before this arrangement became standard practice for double deckers and urban buses and indeed Reading Mainline retained conductors until just past the year 2000. Modern buses now tend to have the engine at the rear in the cavity previously occupied by the luggage compartment and with improved chassis design the eighteen inches reduction is achieved by lowering the floor of the lower saloon which also accommodates passengers with buggies and wheelchairs.

Engine design has also been revolutionised. Early buses had relatively small petrol engines but by the mid 1980s virtually all buses were diesel powered and in recent years have been using bio-fuels.

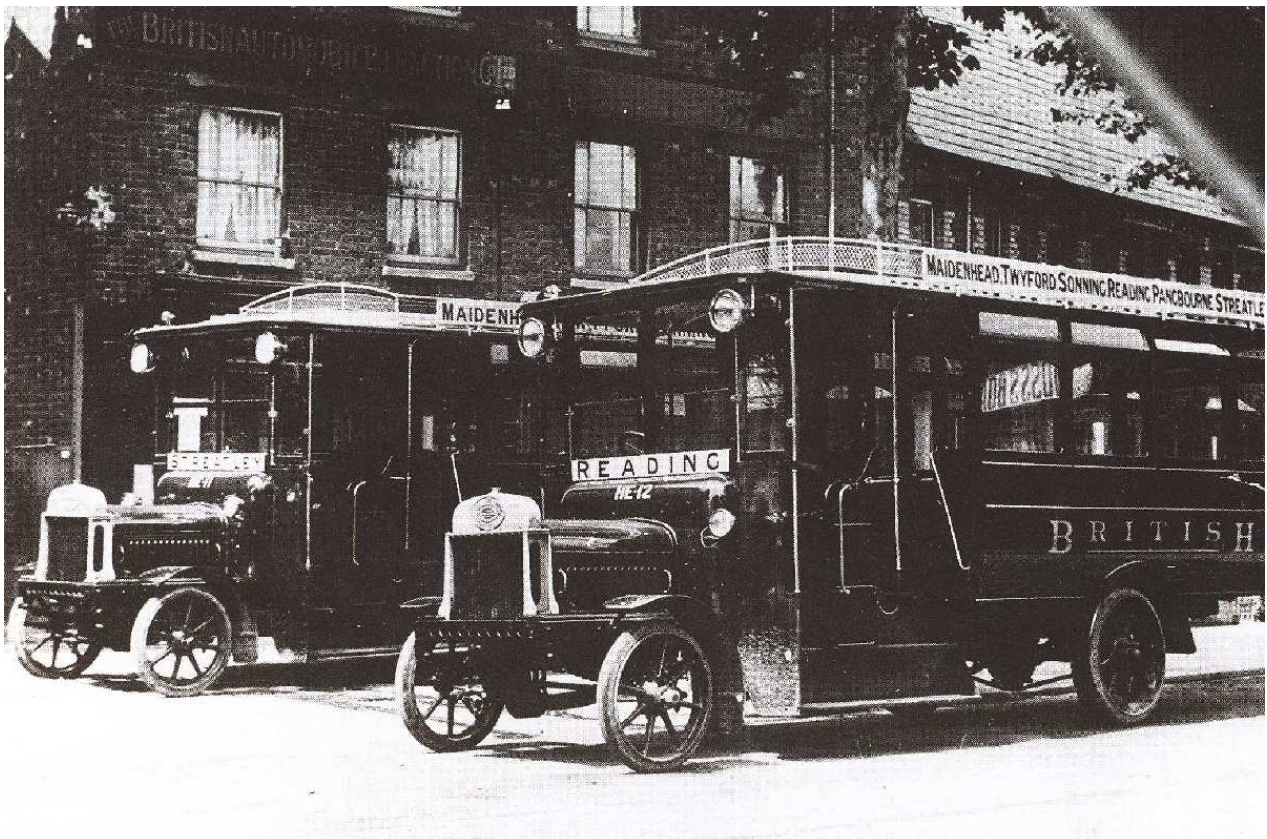
Chapter 6

Bus Services between the Wars

The bus industry grew rapidly from the development of the motor vehicle which was spurred by the First World War. The earliest services for our area we know about began in 1915 and by the start of the Second World War buses which were reasonably well integrated into the railway network gave the whole country a truly national public transport system. Very few villages were more than four miles from a railway station and there were always entrepreneurs prepared to provide a feeder service.

British Automobile Traction Co.

One of the first services to Purley and Pangbourne was started by a bus manufacturer when a branch of the British Automobile Traction Company was established to operate bus services. Its first route was from Streatley to the Bear Hotel in Maidenhead. This started operation on Saturday 31st July 1915. It used five 30hp Leyland S-type single deckers registered HE 8 to HE 12. They came from the



Two of the BAT vehicles

Barnsley and District Traction Company and were soon returned to them. They had 27 seats and were licensed to carry 32 passengers. They carried the logo 'BRITISH' on the sides with painted boards to show the towns and villages served. The first buses each day left Streatley at 07:20 and Maidenhead at 07:40 and paused for five minutes at St Mary le Butts in Reading before carrying on along what are now the A329 or A4.

One of its buses was badly damaged by a falling tree in a severe storm in early 1916 while travelling through Purley. The service was extended to Wallingford in October 1915 where they met up and exchanged passengers with a bus from the City of Oxford Motor Services. It was about this time that through running was stopped and the Wallingford and Maidenhead services became two separate routes.

It had been the intention of BAT to equip the Reading fleet with vehicles based on the Thorneycroft 3 ton lorry chassis but this was war time and the War Office commandeered all of Thorneycroft's output for military lorries and so BAT had to obtain chassis from Belsize. The bodywork was provided by Tillings of Lowestoft. The first six vehicles were registered as DP1655-1660, 1756 and 1757. During the war most of the conductors were ladies although drivers were all male and many relationships blossomed as a result. By early 1917 fuel shortages meant that the buses were able to run only on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays and by the end of the year they were all running on coal gas fed from a huge gasbag carried on the roof.

In late summer 1917 a special service was added to the timetable to serve the Berkshire Lunatic Asylum at Moulsoford (later Fairmile Hospital) and to ensure that patients did not use the bus to escape only return halves of tickets were accepted there. The special ran from St Mary le Butts at 13:15 returning from the hospital at 16:45.

In 1919 with the war over it was possible to obtain the busses ordered from Thorneycroft of Basingstoke and the first of the J-types arrived in January 1919 as DP 2111 to 2115. Later that year, in July, a service linking Pangbourne and Theale was proposed but there is no evidence that it actually began operation.

In 1920 the bus operations were separated from the rest of BAT and into a new subsidiary known as Thames Valley Traction Ltd. when Thomas Tilling, a Lowestoft coach builder took a 14% interest in the new company.

The Thames Valley Traction Company

The new company took over on 10th July 1920 operating only the Reading to Wallingford Service through Purley and Pangbourne. Route no 4 was shown in the timetable but not on the buses. At Wallingford connections were made with City of Oxford Services. In September 1921 a bus was outstationed at Wallingford to facilitate the early morning service into Reading. The route was renumbered 5 from 1st May 1922, the number it retained until 1992.

When the bridge between Streatley and Goring was rebuilt in 1924 some of the no 5's were diverted to Goring and Cleve but this did not prove successful and were withdrawn in October 1924. Another attempt in April 1926 was more successful and a daily Reading to Goring service was established. In January 1927 a second spur route was started, using a bus outstationed at Wantage. This left Wantage at 1030 and ran to Reading via Blewbury, Streatley and Purley. From Reading the bus covered the Goring services before setting off back to Wantage at 5.30 pm In October 1927 the Goring service was dropped and the Wantage service improved by starting earlier. A short trip to Pangbourne and back from Reading was fitted in at 1 pm. By May 1928 a second trip daily to Wantage was being operated with an even earlier start from Wantage at 8.20 am. Parcels were a valuable part of the business and agents were established at major villages, Messrs. Tidbury Bros. acted as agent in Pangbourne and there was interchange with Reading Corporation at St. Mary Butts.

Fleet numbers for the buses began to be allocated from August 1920 starting at 1 and continuing without duplication until 230 was reached in 1930. A few specialised vehicles escaped being numbered. Bodies and chassis tended to be regarded as separate entities and were often interchanged. When withdrawn from service several of the Thames Valley bodies ended up as summer chalets on the Purley River estate.

Route expansion in 1921 saw the introduction of a new Reading to Woodcote service in June. This ran via Chazey Heath, Goring Heath and Whitchurch Hill as service 15. This was re-routed from September 1921 via Purley, Pangbourne and Whitchurch Bridge. The revised service known as 16 brought in much more revenue as there was considerably more population south of the river than to the north. In January 1922 the service was reduced to run Tuesdays, Saturdays and Sundays only. In May 1922 it reverted to service 15 and in October 1922 the service was withdrawn completely.

Reginald Braggs and G Jarvis

Reginald Redwood Braggs set up a charabanc business in July 1921 with a 14 seater vehicle registered DP 3791 and known affectionately as 'Cushy'. He operated variously from Kentwood Hill and garages in the Oxford Road. As well as local hire trips he organised several long distance tours to places as far away as Cheddar and Torquay, being known as Cushy Motor Tours. As the charabanc business was both very competitive and seasonal, he decided to go in for scheduled bus operation and was granted a licence to operate between Reading and Tidmarsh in January 1926 under the name 'Reading and District Motor Services'. The fare between Purley and Reading was 5d return and 7d between Reading and Tidmarsh. The service was later extended to Ashampstead and finally to Yattendon in April 1929.

The following Time Table will operate until further notice.

	WEEK-DAYS.										SUNDAYS.										Fare	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
READING (Town Hall) dep.	8	43	1035	1239	2	404	10	330	15	30	8	39	11	015	302	434	156	157	459	0	1	
Post (Roebuck) ...	8	57	1050	1246	2	534	15	345	30	45	8	45	1115	1245	3	44	306	308	09	15	4	
Post Office ...	8	59	1054	1249	2	534	19	346	30	45	8	49	1119	1249	3	44	356	348	49	19	6	
Pourne (George Hotel) ...	9	41	1059	1254	3	44	244	346	30	45	9	54	1124	1254	3	44	406	392	99	24	9	
Basildon (Beehive) ...	9	14	11	91	43	144	346	46	30	45	9	4	1134	1	43	194	506	492	139	34	11	
Ashampstead Turn ...	9	20	...	1	103	204	40	...	5m	5	...	1140	...	3	25	...	6	55	...	9	40	1
YATTENDON (Royal Oak) arr.	9	33	...	1	203	304	50	...	5m	5	...	1150	...	3	35	...	7	5	...	9	50	1
YATTENDON (Royal Oak) dep.	9	40	...	1	403	504	10	...	5m	5	...	1	0	...	3	206	408	0	...	10	0	4
Ashampstead Turn ...	9	50	...	1	503	455	20	...	3m	5	...	1	10	...	5	308	508	10	...	10	10	4
Basildon (Beehive) ...	9	57	1117	1	573	525	278	523	129	45	10	10	1	172	03	305	377	08	20	9	45	10
Pourne (George Hotel) ...	10	5	1123	2	71	15	377	13	20	5	10	21	25	2	30	325	477	198	293	55	10	
Post Office ...	10	11	1131	2	124	65	427	68	27	10	10	26	1	312	143	445	527	158	34	10	11	
Post (Roebuck) ...	10	15	1135	2	174	106	467	103	20	10	10	30	1	352	193	495	567	198	38	10	11	
READING (Town Hall) ...	10	30	1150	2	324	256	172	258	4	10	10	45	1	502	348	48	117	348	53	10		

a Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays only. m Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays only. s Saturdays only.
w Wednesdays and Thursdays only.

By October 1926 he was sharing facilities at la Castle Street in Reading with G Jarvis and Sons who operated as 'Comfy Coaches'. In November 1926 he started a new long distance coach service from Pangbourne to Marble Arch in London which operated Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, but this did not last very long.

Jarvis seems to have become a partner with Bragg and the two businesses merged around March 1929. Licences for the Reading to Yattendon service were renewed in the name of Bragg, but Jarvis was in sole command and he sold the business to the Thames Valley Traction Company on 1st January 1936. Two vehicles were transferred to Thames Valley in the deal. They were a 1931 Star 'Flyer' (RD 3016) and a 1934 Thorneycroft 'Ardent' 26 seater (RD 6270).

Herbert Galpin

Herbert Galpin of Yattendon appeared on the scene in September 1925 when he licensed a Ford 'Model T' 14 seater bus (MO 5902) and ran a service between Yattendon and Reading on Tuesdays and Saturdays. He had started as a carrier and gradually moved most of his operation to buses, but still carrying parcels as well as passengers. He was still operating just before the outbreak of the Second World War. Some of the other vehicles he operated were BL 7928, a Republic 'model 11x' carrier's van with seating for 14 passengers; MO 3459, a second Republic which by 1932 was licensed only for goods; MO 7520, a Ford 'T' 14 seater charabanc painted red; and RX 6889, a Ford 'AA' 14 seater coach which survived under another ownership until September 1950.

T R Harris

Thomas Richard Harris of 'The Nutshell' in Yattendon started a horse drawn service between Pangbourne and Newbury during the First World War, but on Tuesdays and Saturdays he extended the service to the Peacock in Reading. In September 1920 he acquired a Republic 'Model 11.X' carrier bus painted green and registered as BL 7928. He sold out to D A Stewart of Yattendon in 1922, who in his turn sold out to Gilpin around 1925.

J Prothero

J Prothero started his bus services between East Illsley and Newbury in partnership with R V Revell in Jan 1921 as an extension of their carrier business. In December 1931 they extended their services to run into Reading via Compton, Ashampstead, Upper Basildon, Pangbourne and Purley. At first they were refused a Hackney Licence from Reading Borough Council and had to operate from private land near the Palace Theatre. They operated daily, except Wednesday with four return journeys but on Fridays and Saturdays they added a late evening service and on Sundays there were only the two afternoon services.

Protheros obtained their licence immediately the Traffic Commissioners took over licensing and regulation from the Borough and District Councils after the 1930 Transport Act, but in September 1932 they were taken over by the Newbury & District Transport Company which had been founded only a few months before. They had three buses out-stationed at East Illsley to provide the services to Reading and Newbury and other buses operated from the Newbury and Reading garages.

William White

William White was a carrier in Hermitage. He and his son Edgar started a regular passenger service to Reading in July 1922 running via Yattendon, Upper Basildon and Purley. He ran only on his regular days of Tuesday, Friday and Saturday. The Saturday return journey was delayed until 9 pm to allow for visits to the cinema. He had two vehicles which seemed to be readily convertible between bus and lorry operations. In June 1925 they acquired a 14 seater Mason charabanc (MO 5620) This was putty coloured and named 'Tony' In October 1925 they acquired another 14 seater charabanc, a Chevrolet, registered MO 6416 this was sold to Pococks towards the end of the 1920s. A Dennis 30- cwt 14 seater coach (RX 5493) was purchased in November 1929 and a second, slightly larger vehicle in May 1930 (RX 6401) By 1930 some of their Reading journeys ran via Compton and Aldworth and the Saturday trip was dropped. In September 1932 their whole operation was revised and the buses travelled into Reading on Tuesdays and Fridays, but via Stanford Dingley, Bradfield and Theale. Whites sold their bus and coach

business to Newbury and District in Summer 1934 along with the two Dennis coaches.

The 1930 Transport Act

It was the Transport Act of 1930 which, by setting strict standards for timetables, fare tables and maintenance, eventually saw off the carriers and independents, leaving only Thames Valley Traction and Newbury and District Transport operating at the outbreak of War.

Chapter 7

Nationalisation

Immediately after the war there were few alternatives to the buses and they were very heavily patronised. In 1949 Purley Parish Council had to write to Thames Valley to ask for relief buses for the 8 am and 8.30 am services to Reading as they were overcrowded and leaving people at the stops in Purley.

Thames Valley was sold to the British Transport Commission in September 1948 under the terms of the 1947 Transport Act. In March 1950 it also acquired the Newbury and District Motor Services and merged it with Thames Valley. The Newbury company had been formed in July 1932 and had gradually taken over most of the independent operators in the area. It operated through services from Newbury and East Illsley to Reading which also served Purley.



The Thames Valley service to Newbury via Purley and Pangbourne began life as a variant of service 5 to Oxford and was designated 5B

In Summer 1949 the East Illsley service had been service 2 and had occasional trips through from West Illsley. After the take over 100 was added to the Newbury service numbers to distinguish them from the other Thames Valley services. Thus the East Illsley service became service 102 by 1952.

Also in 1950 the South Midlands Omnibus Company was taken over by Thames Valley but retained its separate identity. A consequence was that their two services to Wallingford were made into one continuous service from Reading to Oxford and it

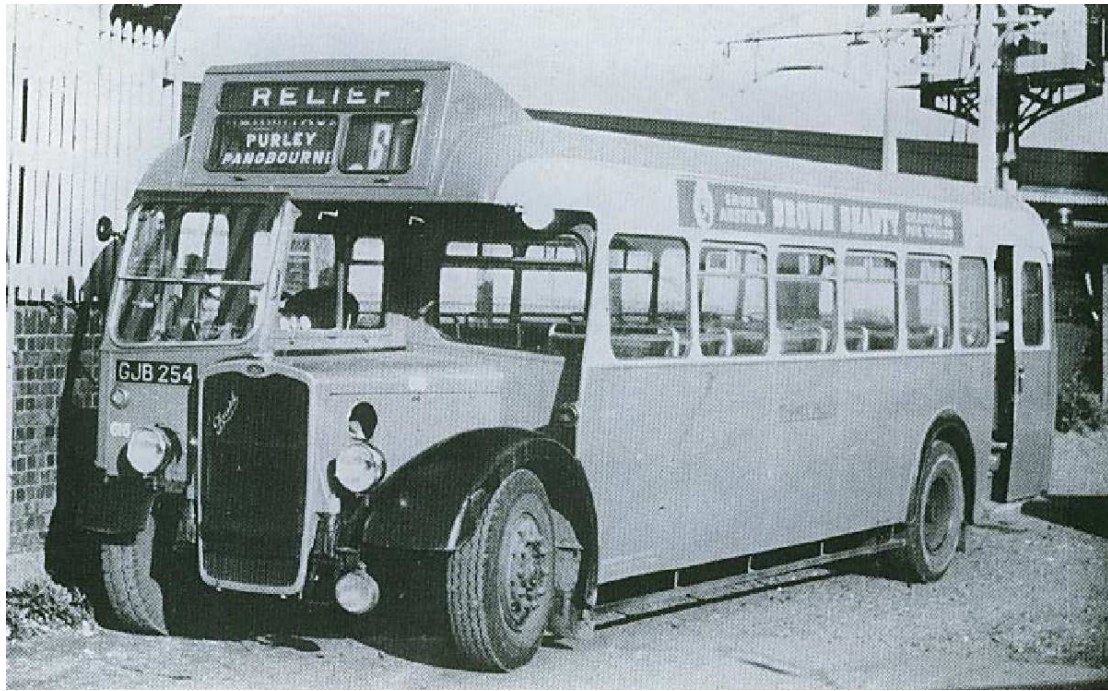
M30536 Service 102 to East Illsley operated by Bristol K JT9355 bought second hand by Thames Valley in 1959



M30533 Service 5 with Bristol RE bus no 231 in Thames Valley livery c 1971

was operated by both companies with their buses alternating on the service which retained the number 5.

By the early 1970s the former Newbury services had become the Thames Valley services 130/131 Reading to Newbury via Upper



M30532 Bristol single decker type LWL6B operating a relief to Service 5 c 1958

Basildon, Yattendon and Hermitage, 133 Reading to Compton via Ashampstead and 132 Reading to Didcot via Streatley. They operated through Purley via Oxford Road, New Hill, Purley Village, Purley Lane and Reading Road (now Purley Rise), except for the 131 and 132 which followed the main road. At that time Thames Valley were also operating service 5 from Reading to Wallingford and Oxford and the 11a (later 11b) Reading to Tidmarsh both along the main road. A service to Newbury numbered 5B was operated from Reading via Panbourne Yattendon and Hermitage.



M30535 Service 5B with Bristol RE bus no 187 c 1969

Chapter 8

The National Bus Company

The 1968 Transport Act saw the formation of the National Bus Company and all stage carriage service except the municipals and a few remaining independents were forcibly amalgamated into one huge Nationalised industry. To preserve some sort of local identity the several regions were allowed to operate under their own name and to choose between four colours for their buses. Thames Valley was merged with the Aldershot and District Motor Services and chose Poppy Red as their colour which was similar to the old Thames Valley livery.

It is not too unfair to observe that the merger was an unqualified disaster, both nationally and locally. What had been a locally run, responsive service was turned into a bureaucratic nightmare with unrealistic financial regulations and a very remote management structure. Its appearance also coincided with a rise in the ownership of private cars and the inability of the buses to respond quickly to changing travel patterns saw a dramatic fall in patronage.

By 1979 the situation had got so bad and National Bus was losing such huge sums of money each year; with Alder Valley one of their worst performers, that they instituted a 'Marketing Analysis Project' (MAP) which took a very hard look at the patterns of service and the

PANGBOURNE - READING SUMMARY (Showing all journeys between Pangbourne and Reading).

Departs PANGBOURNE, George Hotel.

Departs READING, Bus Station, Bay 11.

Mondays to Saturdays

Sundays

Mondays to Saturdays

Sundays

0658	100	1534	5	1134	5	0609	5	1430	100	1005	5		
0722	100	1602	100	1334	5	0630	NS	13	1505	5	1205	5	
0749	100	1634	5	1504	5	0700	5	1530	5	1335	5		
0814	NS	13	1659	5	1534	5	0705	100	1605	5	1405	5	
0829	5	1702	NS	100	1634	5	0805	5	1630	100	1505	5	
0858	5	1734	5	1734	5	0830	S	100	1705	5	1605	5	
0929	5	1802	S	100	1834	5	0840	NS	100	1730	NS	100	
1002	100	1834	5	1934	5	0905	5	1735	NS	13	1805	5	
1034	5	1920	NS	13	2034	5	1005	5	1805	5	1905	5	
1134	5	1934	5	2134	5	1030	100	1830	S	100	2005	5	
1202	100	2034	5	2234	5	1105	5	1905	5	2105	5		
1234	5	2134	5	2332	5	1205	5	2005	NS	5	2215	5	
1334	5	2338	S	5			1230	100	2030	S	5		
1402	100	2350	NS	5			1305	5	2225	5			
1434	5						1405	5					

CODE NS—Not Saturdays S—Saturdays Only

Service 5 is operated jointly by City of Oxford and Alder Valley.
 Service 13 is operated by Alder Valley.
 Service 100 is operated by Kennetbus.

The KennetBus summary timetable between Pangbourne and Reading 17/2/1980

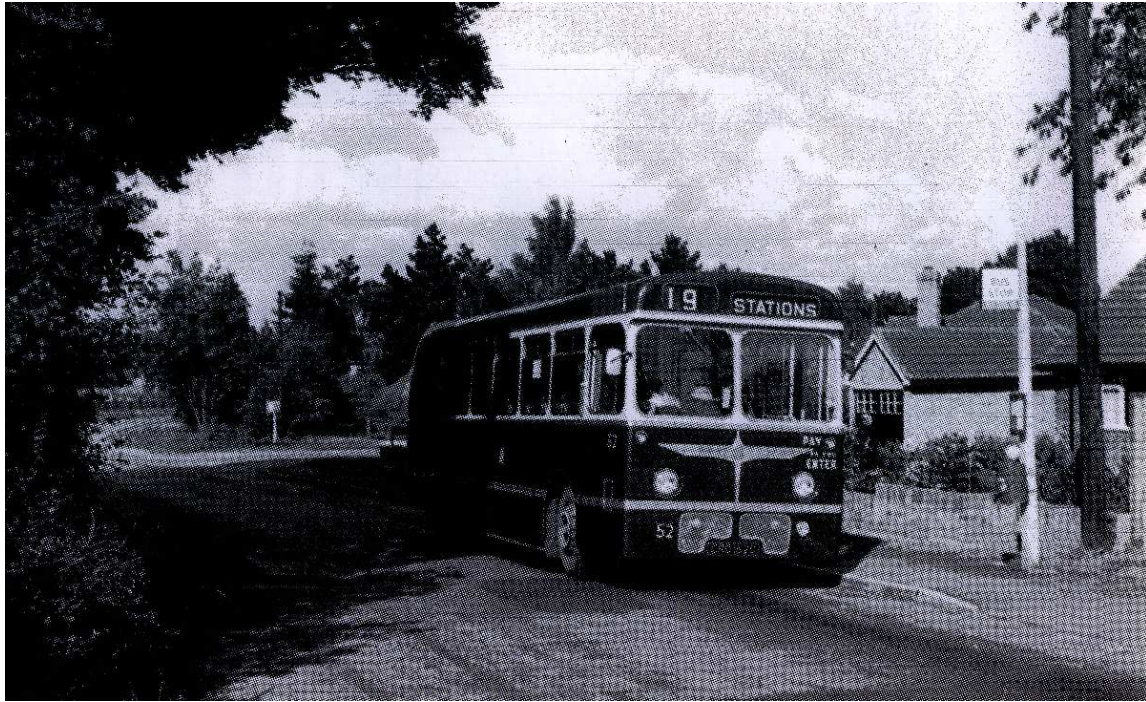
potential for new business. In the Reading/Newbury areas generally there was a very severe cut back in services but the no 5 escaped unscathed. The former Newbury and District services were cut back from 15 buses a day through the village to 7 on one service only, the 100, which effectively replaced the 130. The 132 to Didcot and the 11a to Tidmarsh were axed. The new services were marketed under the name 'Kennet Bus' and Alder Valley saw a complete reversal of its fortunes.



M30541 Two Alder Valley service 119s passing at the corner of Purley Lane and Purley Village (7/7/1984)

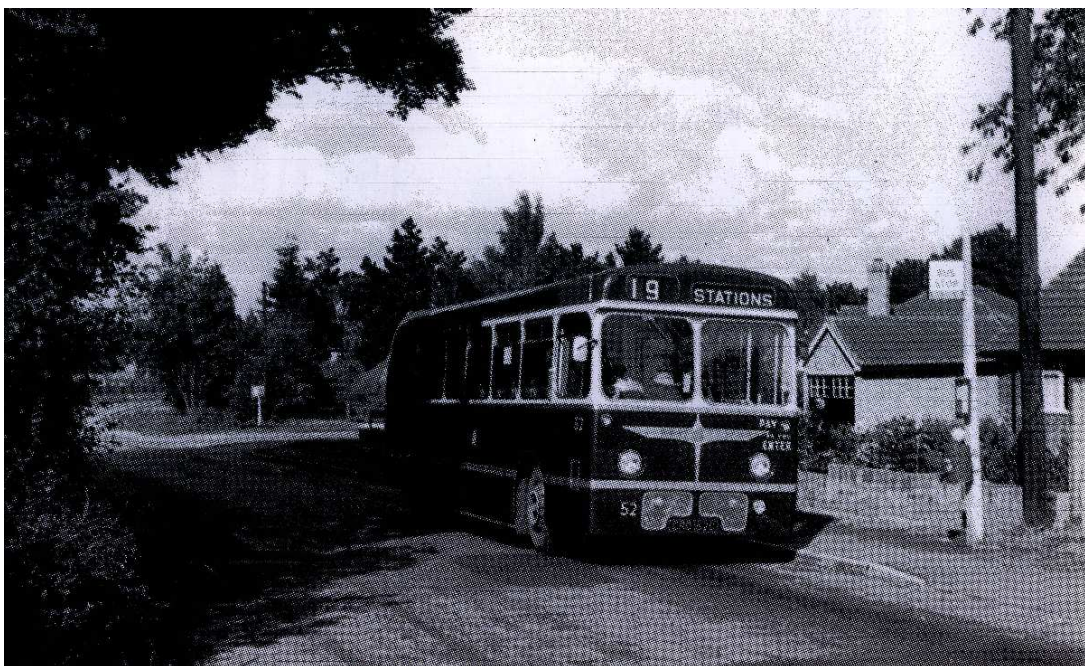
The no 5 service operated originally along the main road, but after many years of pressing by the Parish Council, the Alder Valley buses were diverted down New Hill, Purley Village and Purley Lane in 1983, followed by the South Midland buses in 1985. A few years later the no 5 service was diverted again to run up Long Lane and down Knowsley Road.

On 11th April 1983 a new service, the 119, between Reading and the Sava Centre was started. This served Purley via the Oxford Road, New Hill!, Purley Village, Purley Lane and Long Lane. It was immensely popular between Purley and Reading but beyond Long



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was very poorly patronised. It was seen very much as a lost leader in a local power struggle between Alder Valley and Reading Corporation Transport. Rivalry grew intense and there was no cooperation between them to the extent that each company erected its own flag poles up Long Lane within inches of each other, and often at different angles giving a very odd effect to the street scene. However in 1984 the two companies signed a coordination agreement with the County Council and both agreed to put their flags on the same pole.



M001392 - Thames Valley service 19 in Highfild Road



M30543 - Alder Valley service 100 in Knowsley Road (1987)

As a result the 119 service was abandoned.

On 23rd May 1964 a joint service had been established by Reading Corporation Transport and Thames Valley between Reading station and Long Lane, via Overdown Road. It stopped at a terminus in Highfield Road and returned along Orchard Close. It was the source of numerous complaints from residents of Highfield Road about the oil which dripped onto the road while the buses were waiting and the noise from their idling engines. It was numbered 19 and in 1975, following an agreement sponsored by the County Council was taken over exclusively by Reading Transport. The 19 survived until 14th March 1983 when it was replaced by Reading's service 38 and 39 which extended the journey to the River Estate via Long Lane, Oxford Road, New Hill, St. Mary's Avenue, Colyton Way and Wintringham Way, returning via Chestnut Grove and Brading Way.

The introduction of the 38/39 service was vigorously opposed by some of the residents of the River Estate on the grounds that the

roads were too narrow, the buses were noisy and people on the top deck could see into houses. It proved very popular however and soon built up a steady patronage, including most of the erstwhile opponents. During most of week days it was operated as an hourly, limited stop service from the Tilehurst Roundabout into Reading as the number 39 but in the evenings and Sundays as the 38 stopping at all stops in Reading.

After the abandonment of the 119 service the 100 between Reading and Newbury was diverted along Knowsley Road and Long Lane. At the same time Reading Transport introduced the 37 which followed the 38 and 39 as far as Long Lane and then went down Knowsley Road to turn at the roundabout by Goodliffe Gardens. This was a somewhat irregular service, and was confusing in that the 100 and 37 went different directions along Knowsley Road to reach Reading, but the two services built up a solid clientele from the Wimpey Estate.

In 1989 the Reading Transport service to the River Estate was revised to be a half hourly one but at Knowsley Road the service split with half the daytime buses going on the old 39 route and the other half going via Knowsley Road, Oxford Road and New Hill as the new 38. The evening and Sunday services were operated only by the 38 and all buses stopped at all stops en route although at peak times a minimum fare regime operated on journeys out of Reading.

Chapter 9

Deregulation

The first deregulation came in 1982 when long range coach services were freed from restrictions. Alder Valley introduced a number of services from the area into London under the brand-name 'Londonlink', one of which, the X5, operated from Purley. It started from Purley Village, running via the Oxford Road via Tilehurst to Calcot and the M4. It was extended to Pangbourne two years later but this lasted for only about a year when it reverted to starting from Purley. There was only one coach a day which left Purley at 6.30 am returning about 6.30 pm. It was quite popular and took a small amount of commuter traffic from British Rail.

Full scale deregulation came in 1986 on the passing of the 1985 Transport Act. This divided bus services into two groups, contract and commercial. The commercial services were those which a bus operator believed it could operate with its own resources without a public subsidy. They had to be registered as such and vehicles had to be inspected for safety etc. The Contract services were those which a Local Authority wished to see provided, but for which there was no registered operator. In this case the Authority could ask for tenders

against a defined level of service to which any qualified operator could respond.

On the local scene Reading Transport registered all their routes as 'commercial' but Alder Valley registered only the off-peak weekday no 5 service. As a consequence the County Council off-



Reg Marshall, chairman of Purley Parish Council, boards the inaugural White's Sunday service in Long Lane for a trip to Pangbourne

ered the 100 service and the remaining 5 services for tender. The result was that Alder Valley won the 100 weekday service which was operated mainly only between Pangbourne and Reading and the weekday peak number 5. The Sunday service was awarded to White's Coaches of Tadley who operated between Reading and Pangbourne as the 505. It was never well patronised and survived only for two years. In 1989 the contract was re-let and this time Bee Line won, but they could not attract sufficient patronage. Finally in June 1990 the County Council decided. it was not worth subsidising any longer and the Sunday service was discontinued. A year later a similar decision was taken about the evening no 5 services.

The Alder Valley Company was split up in 1985 with the former Thames Valley becoming known as Alder Valley North and virtually independent of the Aldershot services. In early 1987 it became the Berkshire and Buckinghamshire Bus Company with the Trade name Bee Line. Its vehicles changed from the old poppy red livery to a bright yellow and deep red livery which always looked very tatty. In December 1987 it was sold to Len Wright Travel as a going concern with around 200 buses. Len Wright, who lived at Bucklebury had been running his own travel company since 1976 and had a fleet of 35 coaches and 15 buses based at Isleworth when he bought Bee Line. Under his aegis there were no major changes to the services through Purley.

In April 1988 the Bee Line had a major catastrophe when an arsonist burnt down the garage in Newbury along with many of their buses. Luckily the fire occurred on a Sunday and by the Monday Bee Line were flooded with offers of help and support from other bus companies who loaned or leased buses to them. Miraculously no service hours were lost, but Purley was to see a motley collection of buses bearing logos from as far afield as 'London Country' and 'De Cymru' In addition the Careline bus which had been specially adapted to carry disabled passengers often appeared on the 100 service.

Chapter 10

School Bus Services

Children from Purley Village School were taken by bus to Pangbourne from 1925 when it was decided to make it a school for children up to eight years only. The service was initially provided free by the County Council but later parents had to pay as the journey was less than the statutory three miles. It was operated for many years by a local carrier, Mr Lee of Horseshoe Rd, Pangbourne. He operated a very strict regime and any child who misbehaved was liable to be turned off and made to walk. Pupils used to board the lorry at the bottom of Long Lane into which he reversed to turn around for the journey back to Pangbourne. One day a young lad tried to get on while he was reversing and was run over. Later the service was replaced by a coach run by Smith's Coaches. The Smith's had a tenuous Purley connection as part of their garden at the bottom of Elsley Road strayed over the border. The service was discontinued in 1966 when Long Lane School was opened.

Services to Theale Green School and Little Heath School were provided under contract to Berkshire County Council for many years by Pangbourne coaches. Later they were made stage carriage services

with the County Council providing a free pass to those who lived more than three miles away from school. It was therefore available for those who lived less than three miles and were willing to pay. They were



Service 86 Little Heath - Calcot - Theale - Pangbourne (16/12/1992)

also nominally available to members of the public but it is doubtful whether anyone else ever availed themselves of the services.

When Pangbourne Coaches went out of business in March 1985, replacement services were provided by Reading Transport who initially operated the 89 from Purley to Little Heath, the 88a to Theale Green via Pangbourne and the 88c to Theale Green via Tilehurst. Denefield School was already well served by the 37 and 39 services and so no special arrangements had to be made initially although Reading Transport operated special afternoon buses for the children which started from the school.

The services have been modified over the years and Denefield pulled its hours forward in order to get a better service for its pupils. In 1995, as well as the regular 38/39 service there was a special 91 from Coley Park to Denefield which also serves Prospect and Meadway Schools., an extra 110 service brought children from the Oxford Road area of Reading and a linking service (the 85) left Denefield at



M30582 - Service 88 dropping off children from Theale Green School at Purley PO stop (1992)

0830 running to Little Heath and St Paul's Schools. Two service 89 buses operate to Theale Green School via Purley and Pangbourne. One starts on the Overdown Road and the other at Purley Post Office. There was also an extra 39 service starting at Denefield in the afternoon.

By 2007 the pattern had settled down to the 88 and 89 running a circular route to Theale Green, Denefield and Little Heath to serve children from Theale, Pangbourne, Purley and Birch Copse with an extra 38 along the Oxford Road to get children to and from Denefield. The 31 had a few extra services starting at Denefield to provide the main scheduled service for children from Tilehurst.

Several private schools in the area run their own special buses which pass through Purley to pick up children in the morning and return them at night. There has also been a bus from Purley for children attending Englefield Primary School paid for by the parents. This was dropped after a boy was killed after getting off the bus at Purley Post Office and dashing across the road. It also coincided with a large drop in the number of Purley children attending Englefield.

In 2010 Reading Buses withdrew from their school services to Little Heath and Theale Green School as West Berkshire Council withdrew their subsidies. Instead the services were passed to The Green Bus Company based in Birmingham and while the buses were the same Reading Buses, reliveried with the same drivers the service was to be run on a commercial basis.

Chapter 11

Other Bus Services

Over the years there have been many companies who operated contract buses for their employees which passed through Purley. This has included the Atomic Establishments at Aldermaston and Harwell. Also G Percy Trenthams provided minibuses to pick up employees and deliver them to Purley and when they moved to Theale it picked up in Purley to take employees to Theale.

Michael Moon of Sulham House ran a coach service from a garage on the site of the old Marsh Barn on the north side of the A329 in Pangbourne where now 'Court stands. He held a number of school and commercial contracts but sold up to a developer just before his death. The buses were painted white and were labelled 'Pangbourne Coaches'

In early 1988 Reading Transport won a contract with Southern Electricity to run a bus service from Reading to Newbury each morning as they had closed their Reading office and moved all the staff to Newbury. This ran via the Oxford Road to the Purley roundabout, up Knowsley Road and thence via the A4 to Newbury. It picked up at Knowsley Road at 0815 and they used the Gold Line coaches for the trip.

An interesting innovation was the introduction of the Ridgeway Explorer in May 1994. This ran through the summer offering 4 buses each Sunday each way between Reading and Swindon via Purley, Stratley, Goring, Illsley and Wantage. It was designed to encourage walkers on the Ridgeway to take a bus to their starting point and from their finishing point. When the service resumed in May 1995 an arrangement had been reached with British Rail to give discounts to holders of rail tickets. It was operated initially by Regis Coaches as their X47 service. It proved remarkably popular and under the joint aegis of Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire County Councils has operated each summer as the X48 service. In some years it ran through from Reading to Swindon and in other years the two halves met at Wantage.

Another Regis Service was the R11 which ran on Mondays from

Wantage to Reading town centre via Harwell, Didcot, Streatley and Pangbourne, continuing then to the Savacentre, allowing two and half hours to shop there before the return journey. Although it passes through Purley it was not scheduled to stop there.

Chapter 12

Transport Door to Door

For many people, using conventional buses was not an option, either because they were unable to walk to a bus stop or board a bus or because there were no bus services. There were four local solutions to the problem: Readibus which provided a door to door service for the disabled; Social Services which provide mini-buses to take people to day centres; the Ambulance service which takes people to hospitals for regular visits and the Pangbourne and District Volunteer Centre.

Readibus

ReadiBus was established under a special Urban Aid grant to provide transport for the disabled in Reading. In 1985 it extended its operations to take in Purley and gained financial support from Newbury District Council. In return District Councillor John Chapman was appointed one of its Directors. It operates a number of specially adapted minibuses one of which was provided Newbury District Council in 1984. The service is run on a book and ride basis and is available to those who are not able to use ordinary public transport

due to disability. All the buses have a tail lift and can accommodate a number of wheel chairs.

In 1990 a new type of service was offered, the Regular Run, whereby a particular type of jour-



M30546 Readibus on display at Long Lane School fete with driver Mervyn Wyld (1989)

ney was made on specified days Thus there were 'regular runs' to Reading Town Centre on one day and to the Savacentre on another. The service has continued to flourish with considerable expansions into West Berkshire and weekly 'scheduled' services from Goring via Streatley and Pangbourne but although passing through Purley did not stop to pick up here.

Social Services

Social Services, initially part of the County Council and, since 1998, part of West Berkshire, have maintained their own fleet of midi-buses which are used to collect people to attend the several Day Centres



Berkshire County Council Social Services bus collecting passengers in Cecil Aldin Drive

and to do a few other tasks for which the buses are suitable. By and large these buses are not equipped to handle wheelchairs

Ambulance Service

As well as providing emergency vehicles the ambulance service also provides midi-buses to collect patients for hospital appointment, usually on a regular basis. For many years the service was run by a Berkshire ambulance service, later an NHS Trust but from 1st July 2006 the services of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire and

Berkshire were merged into the South-Central Ambulance Service. The Berkshire ambulances have been based in the grounds of Battle Hospital and have remained there despite the closure of the hospital.

The Pangbourne & District Volunteer Centre

The Volunteer Centre was established in 1985 to provide a range of services delivered by volunteers. However, over the years, the service has devolved into little more than a car service, taking patients to hospital and Doctors appointments as well as taking people to local

Berkshire County Council Social Services bus collecting passengers in Cecil Aldin Drive

clubs for the elderly and the blind. For many years it was based at the United Reform Church in Pangbourne, but when that was demolished the base moved to the Village Hall. The majority of the trips are to either the Boathouse Surgery in Pangbourne or to the Newbury or Royal Berks Hospitals although occasionally journeys are made much further afield. Volunteers use their own cars and can be reimbursed for mileage. Social Services often used to give a grant to the Centre in recognition of the way it took demand from their services.

Chapter 13

Reading and Newbury Buses

Reading Buses had its origins in the Reading Tramway Company which opened a 2.5 mile, 4 ft. gauge horse tramway in 1879 between Cemetery Junction and Brock Barracks. This was purchased by Reading Corporation in 1901. They electrified and extended the tramway system. Trams continued to run in Reading until May 1939.

Motor buses were introduced in December 1919. Further expansion over the years brought Reading services come out as far as the Roebuck by July 1926. Trolley buses were introduced in May 1936 and rapidly replaced the trams. Expansion of the trolley network to Kentwood caused the abandonment of the Roebuck service in July 1944. Trolley bus service itself ceased in November 1968 when all services were now handled by motor buses, mainly double deckers.

Municipal control ceased in October 1986 when Reading Transport Ltd was formed, albeit still wholly owned by Reading Borough Council. It had to operate as an ordinary commercial company as a consequence of the 1985 Transport Act. In 1990 the name 'Reading Buses' was adopted bringing yet another livery change.

In 1991 Reading Buses bought out the Newbury and Reading operations of the Bee Line. Bee Line Buses based in Reading were repainted in the new Reading Buses livery, except for a few which were scrapped. The improvement in appearance was staggering and they immediately



After Reading Buses bought out Bee line the buses were labelled either 'Newbury' or 'Reading' This Hopper on service 100 was carrying a plastic 'Newbury' overlay but still in Bee line livery (5/10/1992)

looked much smarter and newer. Those based in Newbury became 'Newbury Buses' and were repainted in a similar livery but with a green strip replacing the red of Reading Buses. The fleet of Leyland National single deckers was refurbished and the buses re-



This former Bee line coach no 729 was on one of the last service 5 runs before it was renumbered 105 (26/11/1992)

engined with Volvo engines. The Bristol VRT double deckers were also re-furbished and further examples of both types were bought in to supplement the rural fleet. All the Reading based buses were transferred to the main Mill Lane depot and the former Bee Line depot is now the Reading Buses Engineering Works.

In order to avoid confusion the 5 service to Oxford was renumbered 105, thus keeping all rural route numbers above 100 to differentiate them from town routes. In April 1995 by agreement with Oxford Buses, the joint operation ceased and Reading and Oxford each operated to Wallingford with timetables adjusted so that through journeys could be made by changing at Wallingford.

The 110 ran from Newbury to Reading via Pangbourne. A new 199 Service from Upper Basildon to Reading was introduced in 1994 as a variant of the 110. This ran via Grovelands Road, Waverley Road, Tilehurst Rd, Liebenrood Road and Bath Road to provide 'get to work' opportunities for people working in the west of Reading, especially some hospital workers.

Chapter 14

Reading Mainline

In 1994 Reading Buses were given a severe jolt when a new company, run by one of its former chief executives, Royston Jenkins, set up in Reading to run competitive services. They bought a fleet of old Routemaster buses from London Transport and these proved very popular with the public as they were operated with conductors and had an open platform at the back which made boarding very much quicker than on the Reading buses. Their first service was the A which ran between Whitley and Tilehurst via the town centre.

One of the first effects was they they went to Reading Borough Council and demanded £500,000 as compensation for accepting their oap passes, which they were empowered to do by the 1985 Act. This caused shock waves to reverberate throughout the Reading Council / Reading Buses hierarchy as they were not only faced with competition but had to subsidise it into the bargain. They responded by running some very uncommercial services timed to arrive just before the Mainline buses.



A pair of Routemasters of Reading Mainline at the Purley Post Office Stop

Nevertheless Reading Mainline flourished and bought many more buses and pioneered many new routes. The service D was introduced to Purley in 1998 and operated from the Sherwood Rise roundabout via Knowsley Road, Long Lane, Dark Lane, Pierces Hill, The Triangle, Curwen Road, Tilehurst Road, Russel Street and the town centre finishing up at the Royal Berks Hospital. This proved quite popular with the public, especially as it was a somewhat faster route to town than the Reading buses.

The service however appeared very scruffy. The buses were old and clapped out and most of the drivers and conductors were unkempt. There were also many complaints about the crew using the back of the bus shelter on Purley Rise as a toilet. However it was a very cheerful service and filled a niche. During Mainlines' period of operation it ran to a half hour frequency but only at off peak times Monday to Friday.

In 1999 Reading buses bought out Mainline but maintained their services and buses for another 18 months from a depot on Cardiff Road. At the end of this period however the buses were sold off and the conductors retrained as drivers as Reading Buses' major problem was their inability to recruit drivers because of the high cost of living in the Reading area.

Chapter 15

Buses at the Millennium

When the time came to phase out the Mainline buses it was decided to recast the services to retain the new markets which Mainline had pioneered. At Purley the D service was retitled 31 and the 38 was rerouted to take in the terminus on Purley Rise. The route of both services ran for a short distance along the Oxford Road, down New Hill, around the river estate, back up New Hill and then via Knowsley Road and Long Lane to Dark Lane. Here they split with the 38 going down Overdown Road and the 31 up Pierces Hill. However both services operated to an hourly schedule separated by half an hour giving a half hourly service to the town centre. The 39 by this time was reduced to four buses a day serving the lower part of Long Lane. Reading Buses would have liked to have gone down Purley Lane and through Purley Village to the River Estate but their buses were so much bigger than the old Thames Valley vehicles that this proved impossible and they tended to bottom out on the right angle bends and often could not navigate between parked cars.

However Long Lane still retained the 105 service which had its ups and downs. The arrangements with Oxford Bus were terminated and they reverted to meeting in Wallingford instead of through running between Oxford and Reading. Then Oxford Bus gave up their half of the service and for a very short time Reading Buses ran through. However patronage had all but disappeared and Reading Buses curtailed the service at Pangbourne, retaining the hourly frequency off peak as a subsidised service. One service designated 106 ran via Purley Village in the morning around 9 am but as there was no return journey it was not very useful. Eventually in Spring 2002 the 105 was taken out of service permanently, being replaced by an off peak service run by Thames Travel.

Thames Travel was based in Wallingford and began their service to Purley with the 132 from RAF Benson to Savacentre via Pangbourne and Long Lane. It was very irregular and poorly advertised. When the 105 was dropped however, they were subsidised by West Berksh-

ire Council to operate a service to Reading and ran four buses each way through Purley following the A329 and did not pick up en route after Purley.

Starting 4th October 2001 Reading Buses began a night service. This had been requested by and was subsidised by Reading Borough Council. One of these routes served Purley, the N9. It came along the Oxford Road, then via Grosvenor Road, Dee Road, Tilehurst Road, St Michaels Road, Pierces Hill, Dark Lane, Long Lane Knowsley Road, Tilehurst Station and back into town along the A329. It ran one way only leaving Reading at xx:30 from 20:30 to 00:30 weekdays and 03:30 Fridays Saturdays and Sundays.

Another odd service was the football special from Purley to the Madjeski Stadium on days when Reading were playing at home. Designated the 77 it started at Purley.

After many months of deliberations and many rumours and counter rumours Reading Buses finally announced their proposals for a complete recast of their services in the Greater Reading Area to take effect on October 28th 2002.

Insofar as Purley was concerned the service improved considerably. The 39 was dropped entirely and the 38 became an evening only service running from Reading along the Oxford Road from 19:15 to 23:00 on weekdays and from 0810 to 23:00 Sundays. It did not take the loop at Sherwood Rise and went straight down to Chestnut Grove. An additional 38 ran in the morning to pick up students for Denefield School

The 31 however was increased in frequency to 20 minutes, leaving Purley Post Office at xx:08, xx:28 and xx:48 with some slight variations at peak hours from 06:14 to 19:32. It followed the old route from Purley Post Office but at the Triangle went via the Meadway and Dee Road estate rather than via Curwen Road and Tilehurst Road and finished at Reading station rather than the Royal Berks Hospital.

Earlier there had been changes to the fares structure when zonal fares were introduced in June 2001. There were 4 zones, Central Reading coming out as far as Reading West Station, Inner Reading coming

out to Norcot, Outer Reading to Tilehurst Station and The Triangle and Greater Reading coming out to Purley Post Office. At first there were 4 fares depending upon how many zones you crossed but this was later rationalised to 1, 2 or 3, and 4. A range of daily and weekly tickets were also developed and for Purley the daily ticket, known as a 'Busabout' was a real bargain as at £2.20 it was cheaper than two singles (£1.20 each) and had the flexibility that you could change buses at will or stop off en route. This overcame many of the objections to the withdrawal of the Oxford Road services and through journey to the Royal Berks as it was quite a simple job to change buses at the Triangle for Oxford Road and at the Station for the Royal Berks.

A further change was introduced in November 2002 when the Vault system was introduced. This required the passenger to put exact money into a glass box with no change being given. The main purpose was to speed up boarding but it had the added benefit that the driver could no longer be mugged for the money.

A major revision to Purley bus services took place in February 2008. The circuitous route of the 31 was abandoned and a new 16 service introduced which ran up Knowsley Road, Long Lane and then down Overdown Road running straight along the Oxford Road to Reading Station. It retained its number for the evening services which did not make the slight diversion to Purley Post Office. Part of the revision also included route branding whereby Purley Buses were all painted in a distinctive light blue colour and branded as 15/16 West Reading services although the 15 which replaced the 31 as far as Pierces Hill had very little route mileage in common with the 16, being routed up Grovelands Road and then via the Dee Road estate and the Triangle. Traffic congestion on the Oxford Road was making the 16s often late so in order to maintain the timetable the stops at Purley Post Office were abolished and the buses followed the old 38 route down New Hill.

Chapter 16

Community Buses

The 1985 Act and European legislation had required bus services to be run on a commercial basis and not be subsidised by Local Authorities. While a bus company could cross-subsidise certain services to maintain a network this was not allowed by the use of public money. If a route was not paying its way the bus company could approach a Local Authority and agree a level of service in exchange for a subsidy. Equally the Local Authority could define a service it wanted provided and put it out for tender.

When this legislation became effective Reading Buses which had been owned by Reading Borough Council declared all its Greater Reading Services as a network and run on commercial lines. The Newbury Buses subsidiary however was being subsidised route by route by Newbury District Council, and a point was reached when the services had to be put out to tender. The main tenders were won by Whites Coaches of Aldermaston which meant that Newbury Buses owned the garage and fleet of buses based in Newbury but had no routes to run. They retaliated by declaring the majority of their Newbury based operations as commercial. This prevented Whites running a subsidised service in competition with Newbury Buses and Newbury District Council from paying a subsidy. For a short period there was a stand off as the three parties tried to find a way out of the dilemma. Eventually a compromise was reached and Newbury Buses continued to run their key services with an appropriate subsidy and other services tendered out to a few other operators.

By this time there was only one Newbury service serving Purley and all other services were operated by Reading Buses based in Reading. The 105 service which had been the main bus link between Reading and Oxford had lost most of its patronage either to the car or the railway and so in 19xx Reading Buses curtailed it so that it ran only as far as Pangbourne via Oxford Road, Knowsley Road, Long Lane and Purley Rise. This caused enormous distress in Basildon and Streatley and so a deal was worked out whereby Reading Buses gave up the route entirely and a community bus which diverted an existing Oxfordshire County Council service to the south side of the Thames

and which was partly paid for by West Berkshire Council, was agreed with Thames Travel. This route labelled 132 ran from RAF Benson, via Wallingford and South Stoke to Goring, crossed the river to Streatley and then via Lower Basildon, Upper Basildon and Pangbourne and then via the A329 to Reading. It was not seen as a service for Purley although it proved quite popular with Purley residents as it was a direct route to Reading. The next year a second Thames Travel route, the 142, from Goring Station which served Woodcote and Whitchurch was diverted via Pangbourne and interspersed with the 132 to provide an hourly service between Pangbourne and Reading. In 2008 when the service came up for tender it was won by Reading Buses.

The route from Purley to Reading via Tilehurst which had been pioneered by Mainline and adopted by Reading Buses as the 31 was proving very unpopular with Purley residents and there was about a 60% drop in patronage compared with the former 39 service. As a result in 2008 Reading Buses introduced the 16 and the link with the Triangle was programmed to be severed. A public meeting run by Tilehurst Globe was held and attended by John Chapman and Brian Smith for Purley on Thames Parish Council. At this meeting it was hinted that Reading Buses were contemplating extending the 28 service to Tilehurst Station via Overdown Road to provide an alternative to the 18 which linked the Triangle via Kentwood Hill. But the 16 did that even better and the idea was put forward that instead the 28 should be extended to serve lower Long Lane as this was bereft of service except for a school bus and a large number of 'affordable' homes had been built since the withdrawal of the 105. An approach was made to West Berkshire Council and a new community service was inaugurated on the 25th February 2008. This ran a one way loop down Knowsley Road, along the Oxford Road and up Long Lane. There were five buses a day running to a two hour interval and providing a link between Purley and a large number of facilities, extending to the Royal Berks Hospital.

In May 2008 the 142 which had been run by Thames Travel was switched to Reading Buses which caused some problems as the Reading Buses fares from Purley were much higher and the return tickets were not interchangeable although they were made so after

public protests. Since then the two services, 142 operated by Reading Buses and 133 operated by Thames Travel have provided a very popular service direct from Pangbourne to Reading and although Reading Buses tickets were valid on the 142 most of the people waiting at bus stops within the Borough refuse to board it.

Chapter 17

Tokens and Passes

After John Chapman had been elected to Newbury District Council in 1979 he was made Chairman of the Transportation sub-committee and persuaded the Council to make two sums of £25,000 available, one to assist rural services and the other to provide transport for the disabled. The second amount was used to enable Readibus to serve the eastern parishes of Tilehurst and Purley by purchasing a bus and in subsequent years to provide Handy buses to serve the rest of the district. (see chapter 13) However there was no way the other sum could be used to provide rural buses. Berkshire County Council were already providing Alder Valley with a subsidy of £600,000 pa for which there was no account given. After a lot of discussion it was agreed to provide all the elderly in the District with tokens. The idea was that everyone over 60 should get an allowance of tokens to enable them to make one return journey a week to their nearest shops. A list of about 20 towns and villages which had shops was drawn up and the distance from each person's home to the nearest centre was measured. These were put into three bands of roughly one mile, three miles and over three miles and an amount of tokens allocated based upon the current cost of a bus ticket.

This immediately generated problems as some places did not have a bus service and even if they did it often did not go to the designated centre. So the system was expanded to allow use on taxis and trains and the band calculated on the fare from the nearest bus stop to the nearest designated centre on the route. Pangbourne was simple as all residents were deemed close to their shops and so were put in band 1. However this created problems for Purley as some residents were closest to a stop which took them to Pangbourne and some near a stop which only took them to Reading. This resulted in people living only a short distance apart finding themselves in different bands. This was eventually resolved by declaring all of Purley in Band 2.

John Chapman was also appointed to the Rail User's Consultative Committee for Western England and negotiated a deal with British Rail whereby a senior railpass could be issued by the Council in lieu

of some of the token allowance at a very considerable discount. After rail privatisation the discount was discontinued but one could still purchase the card with tokens at a booking office.

The tokens were also later made available for use on volunteer centre trips and the Pangbourne and District Volunteer Centre accepted both the Newbury and the South Oxfordshire tokens. In 2006 South Oxfordshire used National Rail tokens in place of their own and as they could then be redeemed only at a 5% discount both the Pangbourne Volunteer Centre and Readibus refused to accept them.

At first the tokens were delivered either by post or courier or could be collected in person from the Council offices. This proved very inconvenient and expensive and eventually Purley Parish Council agreed to set up a distribution centre at the Parish Office. This proved very popular and people came from great distances to collect them - usually as they were en-route to Reading by car! There is little doubt that the use of tokens made a small difference to the bus company's finances and encouraged them to retain services longer than they might otherwise have done.

The tokens proved very popular and were used for many unexpected purposes, such as paying a Christmas bonus to char ladies. However many people failed to use their allocation and a substantial amount of money had to be reserved in order to pay out if they were ever presented. As a result it was decided to change the colour regularly and invalidate old tokens. The result proved a boon to the Pangbourne and District Volunteer Centre as people donated their old tokens for the Centre to redeem. Purley Parish Council collected them on behalf of the Centre.

The 2000 Transport Act had required Local Authorities to offer a half price bus pass to all its senior citizens. At first it was feared that this would see the end of the West Berkshire tokens which had been issued since 1985 but at the last minute the Government slipped in a Clause which enabled pensioners to forego their rights to a pass in favour of tokens. As it turned out over 90% of the residents of West Berkshire opted for the tokens and hardly any from Purley opted for the pass.

In 2006 however the rules changed again and Districts were obliged to offer a free bus pass to all its eligible senior citizens. The deal negotiated by West Berkshire allowed users from the Purley and Tilehurst area to travel on any of the routes along the Bath Road (A4), the Oxford Road (A329) and Tilehurst Road and then on to the Royal Berkshire Hospital from Reading Station. As a result the number of passes increased substantially. The period of validity however started in April which created some confusion with the tokens which started in July so from 2007 the tokens were issued in April.

Starting in 2008 the scheme was extended to all local bus services, not just those within the Authority concerned. The intention was that pass holders were given a new pass containing a chip which could be recognised when they boarded the bus and a bill sent to the issuing authority. However few bus companies had the technology to cope and no clearing system was set up. At a national level the fare was to be refunded to the bus company based on where passengers boarded the bus to start their journey but Reading Buses had the chip recognition technology for Reading Borough residents and had a special button to indicate West Berkshire passes so each authority paid for its own residents regardless of where they boarded. The scheme was very popular among elderly residents and most switched to the passes. Eventually in 2009 the West Berkshire tokens were withdrawn except for the disabled who now got a substantial increase with £70 worth of tokens and it was left to Volunteer centres to claim a grant where they had lost out. Needless to say the whole scheme was grossly underfunded by central government.

Appendix 1

Carriers serving Pangbourne and Purley

These carriers usually started from their home village early in the morning, drove into Reading and returned home late afternoon.

Name	Inn at Reading	days	home village	years
Adey	White Hart	h	Highworth	1829
Agg	Elephant	m-s		1920
Baston		uhs	Upper Basildon	1928,31,35
Butler & Shepherd	Wheat Sheaf	s	Blewbury	1830
Butler	Woolpack	ws	Yattendon	1830
Butter	Black Lion	s	Ashampstead	1830
Byzes	Woolpack	m-s	Pangbourne	1840
Cheeseman	Hones Off	m-s	Pangbourne	1837
Clifford	Printing Off	s		1802
Coles		uwfs		1887
Feather				1817,25
Foster	Dukes Head	ws	Goring	1840
Frame	Catherine Wh	f	Moulsford	1801
Gamons	Broad Face	u	Wallingford	1801
Godwin	Saracens Head	u-s	Streatley	1802
Harris	us			1935
Hazel	Broad Face	s	Compton	1801
Hannah Hobbs etc	Peacock	ws	Basildon	1829,30,34
Hudson	Woolpack	s	Faringdon	1829,30,34
Johnsons	Peacock	ws	Basildon	1801
Kent	Peacock	s	Ashampstead	1829,34
Kent	Black Boy	ws	Basildon	1829,34
Kidney & Vize	Woolpack	m-f		1852
Kirby	Wheel	ws	Basildon	1829,34
Knapps	Oak	s		
Kent				
Peacock			Streatley	1801
Lane	Wheatsheaf	s	Blewbury	1840
Lannes caravan	Broad face	s	Basildon	1801
Lawrence	Elephant	ws	Goring	1829,30,34,40
Lee	Forbury	muhfs	Pangbourne	1931,35
Lee	Lower Ship	s	Bucklebury	1801
Nash			Pangbourne	1928,31
Wm Neale	Black Lion	ws	Yattendon	1830
Norman	Woolpack	ws	Yattendon	1829
Picket	Black Boy	ws	Illesley	1830
Piercey	Alfred St		Goring	1837
Pike				
Peacock		ws	Ashampstead	1801,29,34
Pike	Duke's Head		Ashampstead	1830,40
Pocock	Elephant	s	Compton	1840
Rose	Oak	m-s		1802
Sargeant	Dukes Head	m-s	Pangbourne	1895,99, 03
Saunders	Catherine Wh	ws	Streatley	1829,30,37,40
Shepherd	Wheatsheaf	s	Blewbury	1829,34
Simmonds	Catherine Wh	ws	Goring	1829,30,34
Smith	White Hart	mwfs		1891,99, 20
Smith	Elephant	s	Cholsey	1840,52
Smith	Woolpack	s	Yattendon	1801

Steptoe	Three Brewers	ws	Cholsey	1829,34
Taylor	Dukes Head	m-s		1887,91
Vize	Woolpack	m-s	Whitchurch	1829,34,37
Wallis	Upper Ship	ws	Oxford	1829,34,40
Chas Watts	Elephant	ws	Cholsey	1829,30,34
Jane Woodley	Peacock	ws	Ashampstead	1830

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