

Hoc sit Omnis (A Sheffield Corporation Transport of Delight)

The school run, one child per car clogging up the roads and wasting fuel is a very recent phenomenon. Up to the 1950s and well beyond it was customary for the vast majority to travel to school on the bus, and let's not forget the tramcar for those who are old enough!

The neighbourhood comprehensive is now the norm, but a generation or two ago, children attended any school in the city from any part of the city. The result was that morning and evening buses and trams were full not only of people travelling to and from work but school children also, from the age of 11 upwards. Children travelling more than 3 miles to school in Sheffield had a free pass which could be used for one journey to and from school per day, strictly by the route specified. It was paid for out of the city rates, a quaint practice by today's standards, but the system worked well, and the Sheffield Corporation owned the trams and buses anyway. Education and travel have never been 'free,' it is just a question of what the arrangements are, or were, for paying for it. The pass would be inspected, often religiously, by the conductor, another peculiarity of the day, where it seems preferable to hold up the traffic while the already stressed driver has to divert his attention to do that job as well.

Children attended KES and other schools from every part of the city. My own journey commenced with a good half mile walk up hill to Handsworth terminus to catch a tram for Crookes; some had to walk further, such as Alan Senior and Tony Rustling from the other end of Old Retford Road. In those days, a tram left every 5 minutes. This would convey us up and down the various intervening hills, through the industrial areas of Darnall and Attercliffe, along Attercliffe Road to the Wicker, along Blonk Street and up Commercial Street to the centre of town at the Cathedral. Now, children arriving in the City Centre from all parts could be going to any of several schools; KES, High Storrs, Nether Edge, Grange Grammar School for Girls, Girls High School, City Grammar School on Leopold Street, King Ecberts at Dore, Firth Park Grammar School, Greystones or the Central and Owler Lane Technical Schools etc.

In the city centre most pupils had to change buses for the school where they were going. This meant in the mornings and evenings the town centre from Pond Street Bus Station, and Commercial Street to Leopold Street, was buzzing with school children travelling to and from school, all in their distinctive uniforms. There might have been more urgency in the morning with an arrival deadline, but both morning and evening there was always that frisson of excitement for whoever you were going to meet at this exchange or who would get on your bus or tram, and would there be a glimpse, however fleeting, of the girl who would have caught your eye in this daily process? In the evenings especially, this sort of thing would be going on with pupils unnecessarily getting off their buses for some tryst with friends or an amour, from other schools, or from work. The vast majority of those travelling would be changing buses in the town centre.

Whilst my older brother had eschewed this transport of delight and attended Woodhouse Grammar School, the nearest school to Handsworth and right on the southeastern boundary of Sheffield, my "younger older" brother and I undertook this journey right across to the other side of the City. The tram was replaced by the bus in 1958, when the walk up to Handsworth tram terminus became a somewhat shorter one to Ballifield number 52 bus terminus, by Beaver Hill Secondary Modern School, now Handsworth Grange Comprehensive. Many of us

had to be out of the house well before 8 o'clock. I remember the signal for my brother to leave for the tram, well before I first went to KES, was the passing of the Master Cutler on the nearby railway. Considering the process occupied 1½- 2 hours of one's life every day for 7 years it must have made some contribution to the formative effects. If I was going to Whiteley Woods on a Saturday to represent the school at cross-country, football or cricket, it took even longer. In the mornings if I arrived at the bus terminus first, I would wait for Alan Senior and David Halliwell to arrive before boarding. We would be joined often, before the bus reached Handsworth top, by my fellow Athelstan Edwardian, John Bows and sometimes by another, John Machin, at Handsworth top itself. Christopher Hawkins, John Stephenson and his sister Jill, en route to High Storrs, and Graham Eyre going to Central Technical School, would often join us too. In the tram terminus days John Bows and his older brother David, and Martin Burr would all be at the tram terminus. Jill Smith, also en route to High Storrs would sometimes join us at Darnall or take her leave of us there if our paths had crossed in the city centre on the way home. Later she went to the Commercial College opposite KES itself, thus becoming a member of the "Crookes Corner" group of school commuters.

The journey gave the opportunity for some reading, or in the mornings, last minute homework or vocabulary memorisation, which should have been completed the night before. Usually however it was an opportunity for passing time and conversation with any friends from primary school and elsewhere who got on the same bus, whether going to KES or another school. Sometimes the conversation would even involve schoolwork!

In 1959 Sheffield buses went on strike for 3 weeks. Getting to and from work and school was additionally complicated. The KES system of noting those late was completely overwhelmed, though I do recollect some rather unusual tolerance was granted, but not a lot. My memory is of arriving at school grandly up the central portico steps with dozens of other boys usually during morning assembly. Not bad considering in my case the only option was the 8.15 train (steam hauled) from Woodhouse to Sheffield Victoria and walk from there, the return route being the same. The fare had to be paid of course! Woodhouse station was only a little way further than the tram terminus had been, but for some boys it was a considerable distance to walk. Many boys were on that train, which also stopped at Darnall. The only other option for most of us would have been to walk the whole way!

School uniform, though hard wearing and practical was often disliked, though this dislike did not seem to apply to the woollen scarf. The woollen scarf was decorated with tassels at the ends in the school colours, navy blue and white ones in the case of KES. It became a popular practice to swap tassels for those of other schools; they were easy to remove and replace. Nearly everyone had multicoloured tassels eventually; greens, yellows, navies, whites, maroons, light blues, browns. The KES white ones seemed to be particularly popular. The bus was of course a favourite place for this trade to take place. The boys would want the girls' schools' colours and vice-versa.

My own journey was straight through on the Crookes tram and later the bus via West Street and past the University and the Children's Hospital to Crookes Corner at the top of Newbould Lane for a gentle stroll down the hill to KES. Some of my friends used to get off in town and change to the 60 bus at Leopold Street which took them next to the school at Glossop Road. The change of buses didn't really save much walk or time and the chief motive for this

manoeuvre was no doubt the opportunity to meet the girls going to and from the High School and Commercial College.

Travelling a distance to school and the city centre experience are outside the familiarity of most, but not all, of today's generation, the exceptions being mostly the Catholic and private schools which draw from a wider catchment area, if the car is not the chosen means of conveyance. Perhaps it is something they are missing. However, not everyone went through it. My friend and fellow biologist, Stephen Harston, lived on Newbould Lane, about halfway down on the left. Occasionally we used to meet as he came out of his gate about a quarter to nine as we completed the last leg of our journey towards the Newbould Lane gate. He might only have been out of bed 15 minutes or so, with about 100 yards to walk!

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