
 * FROM TILLING TO NATIONAL BUS COMPANY *

The Story of Eastern Counties Omnibus Co. Ltd. 1939-1970 by C.G.G. Everett

Part I

Introduction

To many people the bus is something that they take for granted. They will curse it when it is late or has just gone and bless it when it arrives on time. The bus is for the most part a convenient way of travelling around the town or travelling longer distances. The motor car has taken the place of the bus for a number of people, but the bus still has its part to play in society.

I felt it was necessary to place on record the history of the bus in East Anglia because, whilst most people have taken it for granted, very few would stop to honour it as a major link in the history of transport. The history and development of Eastern Counties Omnibus Company Limited is also part of the history of road transport in East Anglia. I trust that railway enthusiasts will forgive me for saying that railways have had more than their fair share of attention in the past and therefore I feel that the humble bus should be given the recognition due to it. It has wandered through the country lanes of East Anglia carrying our parcels, letters and ourselves, for at least 70 years.

The history of Eastern Counties is not well documented and this may be due to the fact that East Anglia has never, until recently with Anderson's "Tramways of East Anglia" caught the eye of the transport historian. I hope therefore that this special study will throw some light on to the subject.

There is also the fact that during the second World War, the Company gave a lot of its documents for salvage and so was lost a fair amount of first hand information.

The only detailed study of the Company that came to hand was the PSV Circle/Omnibus Society's fleet list of all vehicles owned by the Company since 1931. A fleet of buses is not however, the only part in the history of this rural bus company.

In writing this study I have therefore considered the views of those who have worked for the Company and those who still serve Eastern Counties Omnibus Company Limited.

THE 1930s

(a) 1931

The Eastern Counties Omnibus Company was formed on the 14th July 1931 by the amalgamation of four different operating areas. These four constituents had been formed between twelve and twenty nine years earlier. The new company had an area that covered virtually the whole of East Anglia and totalled some 10,000 square miles, mainly rural in character.

The largest of the four areas was that of United Automobile Services, based at Norwich. The United had been formed on the 4th April 1912 to take over the bus services operated by the Great Eastern Railway in the Norwich, Cromer, Yarmouth and Lowestoft area. After World War I in 1918, the company opened up fresh operating territory in Northumberland and County Durham. This territory was later extended to Yorkshire in the north, and Lincolnshire in the east. In 1929 control of the company passed jointly to Thomas Tilling, British Automobile Traction Co. Ltd. and the LNER. The railway operated bus services in the north were then amalgamated with these of United.

The second largest area to be transferred to the new company was the Eastern