

Tilling to National Bus Company

Part IV - Chapter 2 continued - TWO COUNTY TOWNS

(b) Norwich

The story of Eastern Counties activity in Norwich is somewhat different from that of Ipswich. As was mentioned in Chapter 1(a), the United Automobile Services was founded in 1912 and by 1919 it had four bus services starting from Norwich increasing by 1923 to eleven services. Unlike Ipswich, there was no central point to terminate services in the City. Recorder Road was the terminus for Services 5 (the Broads route to Gt Yarmouth), 12 (Wymondham), 13 (Shipdham via East Dereham), 25a (Blakeney) and 25b (Holt). Foundry Bridge was the terminus for Service 7 (Gt Yarmouth via Acle). Ber Street was the terminal point for 11 (Bungay), 17 (Loddon) and 27 (East Harling). Thorpe Station was used as the terminus for Service 10 (Sheringham). A United Express service - 'The Norfolk Express' also started from Recorder Road for London at 0900 going via Ipswich to London arriving at 1400. 'The East Coast Express' operated by United also went via Ipswich in 1928. Both expresses had 'light refreshments on board'!

On 18th September 1929 there was a new express service to Ipswich via the present service 851 route and was operated jointly by United and Eastern Counties Road Car.

The main activity in Norwich however, was the acquisition of the Norwich Electric Tramway Company in 1933 by Eastern Counties. As far back as 1930, the City Council had received a report favouring the acquisition of the trams by the Corporation and then to run buses in their place. The Committee that made the report felt that there ought to be no extension of the tramway system "a source of congestion on the streets" and the cost being too high to acquire the company when relating their proposal to the Tramway Act. This Act of 1897 laid down that 35 years after the date of the Act and thereafter at intervals of seven years, there were to be purchasing powers. Fifty years after the Act, the City Corporation were required to pay the value of the undertaking as a going concern and the cost of street widening carried out by the Tramways in accordance with the local Tramways Act. If however, this acquisition was carried out after 50 years from the Act, the Corporation could do so by paying the then value of the tramway and all "lands, buildings, works, materials and plant appertaining thereto". This 1930 report set the stage for the five remaining years of tramway operation in Norwich. 1932 was the year when the purchasing powers of the Corporation could next be exercised.

In 1931 the Tramway company announced improvements to its trams and developments of bus operation in the City. In 1932 the Company received six double deck Leyland TD2 buses for City services and these were the last buses to be ordered by the Company. This was the year the Corporation could acquire the Tramways and it was a year of uncertainty.

The City Council decided to go ahead with its proposal to acquire the Tramways but there was a certain amount of opposition to this from some Councillors. On the 30th November 1932, Norwich Corporation promoted a Bill to authorise the Corporation to 'acquire the tramway and omnibus undertakings of the Norwich Electric Tramway Company'. It also authorised the Corporation to borrow the money for this venture so that they could abandon the tramways and substitute buses. It should be noted that the Company was not willing to sell at that time. On the 30th November 1932, the Eastern Daily Press carried a Public Notice about the Bill. A public meeting held in St Andrews Hall rejected the idea of the Corporation purchasing the tramways. The voting was 314 against to 275 for the purchase. At this meeting, a Tramway Opposition Committee was organised by R.P.Braund with C.R.Bignold as Chairman. The local press at the time carried such headlines as "Allegations of Trickery, Animated Scenes at Norwich Town