

## A brief history of the . . .



## and it's predecessors in Cambridge

On the 15th April 1905, two companies began the first motor bus service in the city. Not only were they in competition with each other, but also with the tramway service.

The **Cambridge University and Town Motor Omnibus Company Ltd** ran a 25 horse powered light blue liveried Straker Squire - registered CE 299.

Their rival company was the **Cambridge Motor Omnibus Company Ltd** which operated two double decked Thorneycroft buses.

On the first day of service, The Cambridge University and Town Motor Omnibus Company Ltd carried about 1,705 passengers between 4:30pm and 9:30pm, with a fare of one penny.

In those early days there were no set stops. If one wished to board a bus, one needed to wave as the bus approached to get it to stop.

It was becoming apparent that the companies were holding poor safety records and were causing damage to kerbs, lamp posts and other street furniture.



When a ticket person was accidentally killed, this led to both companies having their licences to operate withdrawn in 1906.

On 1st August 1907, James Berry Walford founded the **Ortona Motor Company Ltd** with three new Scott-Stirling single deckers and a second hand Maudslay double decker. He promised to make it a success, despite the setbacks of the previous two companies.

These first four Ortona buses ran in direct competition to the street tramways, having the advantage that they could travel from the entrance of the railway station, to the Post Office and then over the River Cam to New Chesterton, terminating at De Freville Avenue.

With the Ortona buses, came fixed bus stops, the tramway company having chosen to stop whenever passengers requested.

It is said that James Berry Walford decided on the name Ortona after visiting the place of that name in Italy whilst holidaying on a Mediterranean cruise ship.

The Ortona buses adopted a smart leaf green livery with red wheels and body trim and ran every fifteen minutes from 8:00am to 9:35pm, Monday to Saturday.

By the start of the 1920's, Ortona had rival firms, firstly with Whippet in 1919 and then with the Burwell and District Bus Company in 1922.

A new bus station for the city was duly opened in 1925 at Drummer Street.

However, the building of the new bus station sparked a great deal of controversy between the City Council and the city's residents, because the proposed site took land from Christ's Piece, which was a long recognised public amenity.

A mass protest involving some three thousand people took place because the Council started work before approval had been given. Protesters were carried in carts to the Mayors house, with the horses being replaced by supporters.

Before Drummer Street bus station had been built, the original bus service ran from the railway station to the Post Office at the top of Petty Cury and then proceeded to its terminus over the River Cam in the village of Chesterton.

On the 11th July 1931, the Ortona Motor Company was taken over by the newly formed Eastern Counties Omnibus Company Ltd, which was based in Norwich.

The green liveried Ortona buses then changed to the Tilling red and cream of Eastern Counties.

The tramways carried on for another seven years following the emergence of the Ortona Motor Company, until their revenue receipts became so poor that the Company could not afford to pay the Council for the upkeep of the road.

A week prior to the closure of the tramways, the tram cars carried notices informing passengers that the trams would no longer run after the 18th February 1914 and suggested that they should take their children on them, so they would be able to remember them.

On the last day of operation, the receivers decided that the trams should stop early to prevent student vandalism!

The last tram duly departed the railway station at 6.25pm, appropriately driven by Mr Ephraim Skinner, the Company's oldest and longest serving driver.