



a really good story

Being 100 years old is a good a time as any to reflect on a tremendous journey.

We are proud to be recognised as the really good bus company, but these things take time - and, not least, the determination, loyalty and hard work of people throughout the years.

So join us as we retrace our steps all the way back over the course of a century . . .



The Trent bus company was formed on 31st October 1913 but our foundations can be traced to events of Tuesday 14th September 1909, when a company called Commercial Car Hirers Ltd of Highgate in London started a bus service between Ashbourne and Derby using a small open-sided vehicle with seats for 22 people. It ran between the two towns three times on most days, but not on Wednesday afternoons and Sundays, when it was used to run excursions to Dovedale. It was common then to have an early closing day midweek to give shop workers some time off. Early closing day in Derby and Ashbourne was Wednesday; hence the Wednesday trips to Dovedale.

The service was instantly successful, mainly because previously people had to use the railway via Uttoxeter, which could take over 2 hours to Derby Midland Station compared with 1 hour by the new bus service. It was also cheaper and, today, forms part of our current **swift** route. A few other bus routes were soon started, and in 1913 it was decided to combine with other bus interests to form the Trent company, and start to develop bus services over a wider area.

After formation on 31st October 1913 we were in business the following day, taking over the buses and routes of the previous company, which means we have been running buses continuously for a complete century. One week later, on 8th November 1913, we started our own first route between Derby and Stapleford and additional buses were soon being bought.

These first new buses were small with around 22 seats, but after a while we bought larger ones seating 28. However, with the outbreak of the First World War on 4th August 1914 most of our buses were soon taken by the army for war use and almost all our services had to be suspended. We were allowed to keep just one bus, because we had a contract to carry mail to Ashbourne, and so our record of continuous service to the travelling public was unbroken.

In 1915, we bought a bus with an unusual type of transmission. There was no gearbox; instead the petrol engine drove an electric motor which powered the vehicle. These buses were easy to drive but, luckily for us, were not liked by the army. They thought the transmission was too complicated and so did not requisition them for war service. The chassis were made by Tilling Stevens of Maidstone in Kent, and we soon obtained more of them to restart our suspended services.

Continuing war made life difficult and petrol in particular was in very short supply. In order to help overcome this, some buses were fitted with enormous rubber bags carried in a frame on the roof and filled with town gas to fuel the engines. In 1917, a filling point was set up in Derby's Morledge just for this purpose.

War ended on 11th November 1918, but we continued to buy the Tilling Stevens chassis with bodies supplied by several companies, one of local interest being Holmes Bros, which later became part of the noted local motor dealer Sanderson & Holmes with premises in London Road, Derby.

The end of war also brought a surplus of army vehicles and the government created a large army surplus depot at Slough, west of London, to filter these onto the civilian market. We bought 11 Thornycroft chassis and reconditioned 8 of them. Some of these formed the basis for our first double deckers. Others were used for spare parts.



The buses we bought to develop new routes were requisitioned by the government for war use.

But the Derby-Ashbourne route continued because of a contract to carry mail.

1914
outbreak of the
First World War
which lasts
for 4 years



1918
women begin
to get the vote



1920

First World War

We continued to develop our services and by 1925 had bus routes radiating from and between both Derby and Nottingham. There were other bus routes around Loughborough, although today these are now run by our sister company Kinchbus. Over time, as services increased, depots were built in Alfreton, Ashbourne, Belper, Derby, Loughborough and Nottingham. Derby had two depots.

A particular phenomenon of this period was the high level of competition from small operators, many of which were run by men who had been demobbed from the army following war service. The army had taught them to drive, so they then bought a small bus using their service termination gratuity, and set out to earn a living with it.

In many ways, this was an exciting time in the industry, which was expanding rapidly as then only the very wealthy owned cars and there were plenty of potential customers for buses. Most of those involved in the bus industry, particularly drivers, were young, and some relished the competitive aspect. As the bigger company, we were targeted by our smaller competitors

and in 1925 we began to buy buses made by the famous Midland Red company of Birmingham, with which we were closely associated at the time.

These lighter buses, which were known by the initials SOS, and usually referred to as 'Sosses' by drivers (and others), helped us to compete effectively against these small, proprietor-owned operators. They were designed to be light in weight and sprightly in performance, which made them reliable, and gave them both a good turn of speed and low fuel consumption.

Bus design continued to develop. First becoming fully enclosed with weather protection for drivers as well as passengers, buses then became lower making it easier to get on and off and, finally, more comfortable with better quality seating, some being particularly designed to appeal more to women making off-peak journeys to the shops. Our colour scheme had originally been green, but from 1923 was changed to the more familiar red.



1922
We opened one of the first purpose-built bus stations in the country, in Albert Street in Derby

1926
John Logie Baird perfects his invention - the TV



1921

1920s

1929

By 1930, the government decided that competition in the bus industry was getting too great and passed an Act to regulate it. Until then, licensing had been in the hands of local authorities with differing standards in each area. The new Act brought in a national system with licences granted to operators already running services. Any bus operator now wanting to run a service had to demonstrate a public need. Existing operators normally objected, as did the railways. This meant operators were protected from competition. Other measures in the Act related to vehicle safety and testing. Drivers also required a special licence with higher standards than those for driving a car.

Many small operators didn't like the new system and gave up. Between 1930 and 1940 we bought some 52 local operators in our area.

In the early days, bus engines used petrol as fuel, but in the 1930s new buses began to run on diesel, giving better fuel consumption and keeping costs down, although diesel engines were noisier than petrol. After some experiments, we bought diesel-engined buses as standard and, in due course, some

earlier buses had their petrol engines replaced.

In 1939 war broke out, bringing many changes with it, but there was recognition that the bus industry had an important role to play in the war effort, although we did still lose some buses for war use as ambulances.

Despite discussions at international level, preparations for war had been in hand for some time, and almost straight away we had to make withdrawals on government orders to save fuel - most late evening journeys, express routes and our seasonal services were withdrawn for the duration. Also, fixed stopping places were introduced on government orders, as it was considered this would reduce fuel consumption and tyre wear, both of which relied on materials imported from overseas.

In 1940 we received the last of our peace time orders for new buses, and the last built for us by the Midland Red company. We've kept one of these as part of a small collection of our earlier historic buses.

TRENT

Here are excursion buses at a refreshment halt on the way back from Skegness in 1930.

Trent coach holidays gained in popularity during this decade.



1932
first Mars Bar goes on sale



1936
death of King George V



1938
Cunard liner Queen Elizabeth launched, then the largest in the world



1939

regulation in the 1930s

As most bus factories were turned over to the war effort, making army vehicles and equipment and aircraft parts, we didn't get any new buses until 1943, and those were to a utility specification that reduced labour time and saved materials. They were quite basic with squared-off corners and often wooden slatted seats in place of the normal upholstered ones. They were allocated to operators by the government in accordance with need. We received only 32 of these during the war years, far below our normal level of fleet renewal over such a period

In 1942, we began to take on women as conductresses, to replace men who had joined the Forces. We are now familiar with fares being collected by drivers, but in those days the driver sat in a separate cab while a conductor moved around the bus during the journey to collect fares, rang the bell to stop and start the bus and generally looked after customers.

There had been few women in the workforce previously, so we had to provide additional facilities like separate toilets. Although they were only intended to be taken on for the duration of the war, these women did an excellent job and

many stayed on. More were taken on in the post war years - remarkable at the time but, quite rightly, commonplace now.

Overcrowding in peak hours was a big problem during the war, so the government's Regional Transport Commissioner introduced a permit scheme for workers, so that shoppers and others had to travel outside peak times. A few single deck buses had seats along the sides instead of crossways, to make more room for people to stand. To further increase capacity, a number of single deck buses and coaches got new double deck bodies in the utility style.

In 1943, the government required us to use gas but, unlike in the First World War, this was not town gas from the local gasworks carried in a large bag on the roof, but produced in a stove on a trailer towed by the bus. This was not very satisfactory as it reduced the power of the engine, so we had to use these gas buses only on less hilly routes. After about 18 months the government relaxed the requirement to use gas.



With men away at war,
many women were taken
on as conductresses,
like this cheerful group
here.

1939
start of the
Second World War,
which lasts until 1945



1945

Second World War

At the end of the war, our fleet was quite worn out due to the heavy loads we'd been carrying, having to make-do-and-mend on maintenance and the inability to replace old buses. And rationing of fuel, food and other items would continue for several more years.

But we made a start on renewing our fleet. To get it up to scratch many late pre-war buses had their bodies taken off and either scrapped or, quite often, sold to make into garden sheds. The chassis were thoroughly overhauled and new bodies put back on by bodybuilding firms at Loughborough, then something of a centre for bus body manufacture. Many of our bus bodies over the years were built by the Brush and Willowbrook companies in that town, although these factories are now long gone. We also ordered many new buses and by 1950 our fleet was beginning to look modern again, helped by a bright new red and cream livery which replaced the previous red and dark maroon.

Over the years, Derby expanded its boundaries to take in previously outlying areas such as Allestree and Mickleover and,

in an interesting development, from 7th August 1949 the first of a number of joint services with the old Derby Corporation began. These ran successfully until the mid-1980s, when changes in legislation meant that this was no longer possible and the operations were separated. The Corporation buses passed into the private sector and these services are now run by Arriva. We also had some joint working arrangements with Nottingham City Transport which were similarly terminated, although that business still remains largely council-owned.

After the restrictions on travel and deprivations of the war years, in the 1950s people wanted to go out and enjoy themselves again, so once more we were carrying a great many people. We were able to re-introduce express services to places further afield and to the seaside, and our programme of excursions and holiday tours was reintroduced. Passenger numbers soared and, in many ways, the early 1950s was a golden age for our industry.



After the war our buses were run down. A lot were rebuilt to look like new and many new ones bought to meet the increased demand for travel after the restrictions of the war years.

1946
Derby County FC
win the FA Cup

1952
Queen Elizabeth II
takes to the throne



1946

1952

getting back to normal

In the early 1950s costs were increasing due to inflation and higher wages. Then there was a massive increase in tax on our fuel. Also, as more and more people got televisions they went less to the theatre and cinema, reducing the need to travel. Increasing affluence and the availability of hire purchase meant people spent more money on consumer goods and home improvements; less on travel.

More people were able to buy cars and this reduced our passenger numbers, as did a tendency to offer lifts to friends. More cars led to more congestion, which impacted on our reliability.

Despite these problems, people then were still taking their holidays at home and we increased our network of summer expresses to coastal resorts and were able to offer journeys to many other places using connections onto services operated by associated companies. We bought buses with better seats, which could be used as buses during the week, but sufficiently comfortable to be used on longer-distance services at weekends. These had a brighter colour scheme with more cream than red. Later, we arranged coach-air holidays to the

Isle of Man and the Channel Islands and were able to link into continental tours arranged through an associated company.

Buses were getting longer. Single-deckers, with the engine now under the floor, could seat over 40; double deckers with the engine at the back over 70. More seats and a trend towards lighter buses may have helped keep costs down, but the policy of providing a less frequent service with bigger buses only made services less attractive. Although today's longer, easy-access low-floor buses have fewer seats they do let us cater for a wider range of customers than previously, particularly those with small children in buggies, as well as anyone in a wheelchair.

In 1958, following the opening of the A52 dual carriageway by-passing Borrowash, and later Sandiacre and Stapleford too, we introduced an express link between Derby and Nottingham. Trent and Barton were separate companies then and each provided one coach, running hourly each way. Eventually, this would develop into today's **red arrow**, running every 10 minutes using 13 coaches; it also runs through to Chesterfield every half hour.



TRENT

1958

This was when we introduced a fast Derby to Nottingham connection, then running hourly using two coaches.

This grew into **red arrow**, which now runs every 10 minutes using 13 coaches.

1956
Suez Crisis
causes fuel
rationing



1963
the Great Train
Robbery



1966

a new era & new buses

In 1969 we were nationalised and became a subsidiary of the National Bus Company (NBC). Most bus services were now in public ownership, either government-controlled like Trent, or through council ownership as in Nottingham and Derby, or run by large public authorities in conurbations like London, Birmingham and Manchester. Our buses began to look much like many others throughout the country, all-over poppy red with some white.

Neighbouring companies which became subsidiaries of NBC were Midland General and North Western. NBC decided that Midland General and the Derbyshire operations of North Western should be controlled by Trent. By 1976 these had been fully absorbed under the Trent name, although in recent times the Buxton area routes passed to High Peak Buses which already has more services in that area.

Our long-distance express services became part of a nationwide network with coaches painted white. This network, much changed since then, is run today by National Express. We are no longer involved in this, preferring to focus on serving our local customers.

In July 1976 we suffered a fire at our biggest depot in Meadow Road, Derby, with the loss of some 38 buses. The fire occurred in the early hours but it was a source of pride that, despite this loss, no mileage was lost from the following morning's service, thanks to the combined efforts of our staff and the loan of buses from other companies.

The 1970s and 1980s were very difficult for bus companies and we were no exception. People were making even fewer bus journeys while costs continued to rise. Some revenue support was provided by government and local authorities to subsidise bus services but it became necessary to make many changes to our network to match services more closely to the number of people who wanted to travel. Government introduced a grant for some years to help bus operators buy new buses that were suitable for driver only operation, without a conductor, and this helped to contain costs. Many conductors retrained as drivers but the unsocial hours that the job required meant there was often a staff shortage.



Our buses get repainted into poppy red, as do many other bus companies all over the country owned by the National Bus Company.

1969
first man
on the Moon



1980
Nottingham Forest
win second
European Cup



1967



1980

owned by the state

By the early 1980s things had improved a lot and the company was on a sound financial footing. The Conservative government's privatisation plans were about to focus on the National Bus Company, and we would very soon return to the private sector. The government was also going to change the licensing regime, so that the only licence needed was an operator's licence - this was subject to specific quality and stringent safety standards - and the operator was free to run any routes it wanted.

Bus services did need to be registered with the relevant authorities, and any subsequent changes notified in advance. Being a commercial business environment, there would be routes that any company could not justify running, so local authorities could put these out to tender. This was in contrast to subsidising the whole network, as before, and was intended to reduce the cost to government and local authorities.

All this was a major change, effectively reversing the 1930 legislation. In particular, it meant that we were no longer

protected from competition for, under the new rules any licenced operator could run the same routes as ours on a competitive basis and we experience this today. Looking after our customers and researching their needs are just two ways that we aim to stay ahead of our competitors.

At the end of 1986 the National Bus Company sold Trent to its local management and their families, and these local people still own the company today. It is one of only two former NBC subsidiaries that have not been sold to the large groups, and continues to have a very locally-focussed perspective, with a stable, experienced team of dedicated people serving the local community and using many local suppliers.

TRENT
Buses



Local managers bought the company in the government's privatisation programme, and they still own the company today.

We bought 10 new buses like this one in 1986, and continue to invest regularly to keep the fleet up to date.

1985
first mobile
telephone call



1988

1981

new rules to play by

1989

Our **rainbow** routes brought new and much higher standards of customer care, not to mention a whole new way of thinking about how we run the business and how we regard our customers.

Modern buses in individual colours for each route began to appear.

1994

Channel Tunnel connecting England with France opens



2004



This led to further **rainbow** routes and spurred us on to introduce more individually-branded services with buses in their own special colour scheme and marketing initiatives to encourage customer loyalty, just as shops in the High Street like John Lewis and M&S do.

We brought in an on-the-spot, no-quibble, money back guarantee in 1994, still unique within the public transport sector. Along with other customer-focused features and practices, we were heartened that our strategy was making choosing to go by bus an ever more attractive option. Interestingly, this was the first year since the 1950s that we carried more customers than the previous year - and we have generally been on a growth curve ever since.

We firmly set our stall out as a strongly customer-focused business in 1991 when we introduced the first of our **rainbow** routes. These were between Derby and Nottingham and offered a customer charter, new buses and a special team of trained drivers.



In 1989, we bought the business of Barton Transport Ltd, which had begun in 1908 and was based at Chilwell. Although there had been rivalry in the past, relationships between them and us had become quite cordial - indeed some services had been operated by both companies working together - but now the Barton family wanted to sell.

Times change, of course, and in 2005 we decided that both the Trent and Barton businesses should use the **trentbarton** name, to minimise confusion for customers. Along with this, a new modern colour scheme was adopted, which we could adapt for our different brands. Apart from updating the image, this was also to help customers appreciate the extent of our network and make it easier to understand where tickets can be used. But even tickets - and paying the driver - started to become a thing of the past from 2008 as we pioneered MANGO, our innovative smartcard.

A year short of our centenary, in 2012 we refreshed our identity following extensive research with bus users and non-users across the East Midlands. The message was clear - the number one reason why our customers choose to travel with us was the friendliness of our staff. So we're introducing a friendlier image that personalises our approach even more, with a contemporary feel and a new bow logo which appears consistently across our buses and publicity.

The new **trentbarton** identity recognises that we are who we are because of the sum of our parts; our many colourful brands, our customers and our people. Our friendly, outgoing drivers are each dedicated to their own brand, and many of them welcome their regular customers by name. So good are they in the local communities they serve, three of our drivers have won the prestigious Top National Bus Driver award in the past few years.

While we have won many awards for customer service, innovation and marketing over the years, our primary focus is to ensure we remain - in the eyes of our customers and our teams - the really good bus company.

As we celebrate our 100th birthday, we'd love to thank every single one of our employees and our customers throughout our first eventful century. And we're now looking forward to the next one.



Not one to rest on our laurels, we are constantly striving to treat our customers in ever better ways.

And we believe in making sure our image is fresh, stylish and up-to-date.

2012
London Olympics
and the Queen's
Diamond Jubilee



2013

2005

into the 21st century



trentbarton.co.uk

