

Omnibus Society Presidential Weekend 2023

PHRG presentation

8 October

The Origins of Lincolnshire Bus Operators

Peter White

Introduction

- This is a revised version of the presentation given at the Presidential Weekend on October 2023, available via the OS website. Some minor revisions have been made, and text added to make the description more self-explanatory.
- It draws on research conducted from the early 1960s onward, when it was still possible to meet some of the operators who had established services in the 1920s and 1930s in person.

Personal background to Peter White

Born in Grimsby (N E Lincs)

OS member since 1963 (currently express services correspondent)

Founded Lincolnshire Transport Review with Alan Tye 1963 (now the Lincolnshire and East Yorkshire Transport Review, edited by Graham Lord)

Lecturer in Public Transport Systems, Polytechnic of Central London from 1971 (now Emeritus Professor, University of Westminster)

Definition of 'Lincolnshire' for this talk

- Whole county as up to 1974, i.e. three 'parts' of Lindsey, Kesteven and Holland, subsequently split into two-tier authorities of Lincolnshire and Humberside
- Humberside abolished and replaced by unitaries of North Lincs (centred on Scunthorpe) and North East Lincs (Grimsby area). Humberside name remains for airport
- Lincolnshire part of East Midlands region, unitaries part of Yorkshire and Humberside.
- Mostly in East Midlands Traffic area, small part in south east in Eastern.

Lincolnshire railways and tramways around 1900

- Fairly comprehensive network, operated mainly by Great Central in north and west (main areas of industrial growth), Great Northern in east and south
- Light Railways Act 1896 enabled some additional lines (notably Isle of Axholme). All market towns served except Caistor
- Many stations a considerable distance from places after which they were named, low frequency services
- Later lines built to give direct Lincoln - Skegness route (1913) and to serve Immingham docks (1912)
- Street tramways converted from horse to electric – Lincoln (municipal) and Grimsby-Cleethorpes (Great Grimsby Street Tramways Co. [GGST], a subsidiary of Provincial Tramways Co)
- Also the Grimsby & Immingham Electric Railway (interurban tramway GCR 1912)

Country carriers

Provided informal goods and passenger services to market towns (similar to those around Salisbury described in Sam Mullins talk at LT Museum 14 November 2022)

Right Upper: Cart of Dobbs of Swaby near Alford, 1890s

Right lower: Carriers' carts at Louth c1910

(both from W.E.R. Hallgarth collection)

Example – entry from Kelly's Lincolnshire Directory 1896 for Billingborough (note earlier spelling of 'Bourne')

Carriers:—

Benjamin Riddington, to Sleaford, on mon. returning same day; to Bourne, thurs. only

Edward Archer, to Grantham, on sat. ; & Spalding on tues

Stephen Bradley, to Bourne, thurs. ; Sleaford, on mon. ;

& Grantham, on sat



Early bus operations

First significant case the Mail Motor Company, Grimsby – Keelby - Caistor service July 1906, followed by local services to Waltham and Laceby. Proved short-lived, ceasing around June 1907. Vehicles sold to Provincial and used to establish local services in Grimsby area 1909, to Waltham, Laceby and Caistor (the last withdrawn when Enterprise & Silver Dawn commenced Scunthorpe - Brigg – Caistor - Grimsby service in 1925)

Right: EE314 of Mail Motor Co. Dennis 34-seater, sold to Provincial Tramways Grimsby 1909, via Gosport & District (from Chris Richardsen of the Provincial Society)



Provincial Grimsby operations in 1926

Vehicle shown is an all-Guy BB of 1926

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**ALL WEATHER
30-SEATER
PNEUMATIC TYRED SALOON COACH.**

PARTIES from 30 to 120 Passengers can be conveyed any distance in these Fast Running Cars. :: :: :: ::

OPEN or Closed Roof Cars optional. The Open Type can be Closed when required in a few minutes. :: :: :: ::

The Ideal Passenger Car for Long or Short Distance Touring.

ORDINARY OPEN COACHES for HIRE for PARTIES from 14 to 450 PASSENGERS.

FOR TERMS Apply:
 THE MANAGER,
 Provincial Offices, Pelham Road,
 CLEETHORPES. Tel. No. 16.

RICHARDSONS, PRINTERS, Ltd.,
 87c to 101a, Victoria Street, Grimsby.

Provincial Tramways Co., Ltd. Motor Omnibus Services.

FARE LIST.

GRIMSBY, WALTHAM AND BRIGSLEY ROUTES.

Grimsby and Scaithoe (Parish's Shop)	Fare 2d.
Nuns' Corner " Fairfield	
Scaithoe (Parish's Shop) " Waltham	
Waltham " Brigsley	
Grimsby and Fairfield	Fare 3d.
Nuns' Corner " Waltham	
Fairfield " Brigsley	
Grimsby and Waltham	Fare 4d.
Nun's Corner and Brigsley	Fare 5d.
Grimsby and Brigsley	Fare 6d.

ORDINARY RETURN TICKETS.
 Return Tickets are available on Day of Issue ONLY.

BRIGSLEY To and from	10d.
WALTHAM BRIGHOWGATE	7d.
FAIRFIELD (These Tickets are only issued up to 9-0 a.m.)	5d.
SCARTHOE	3d.

LACEBY ROUTE.

Grimsby and Nuns' Corner and 1st Avenue	Fare 2d.
Nuns' Corner " Bradley Cross Roads	
Bradley Cross Roads " Cottagers Plot	
Cottagers Plot " Laceby	
Grimsby and Bradley Cross Roads	Fare 3d.
Nuns' Corner " Cottagers Plot	
Bradley Cross Roads " Laceby	
Grimsby and Cottagers Plot	Fare 4d.
Nuns' Corner or 1st Avenue " Laceby	
Grimsby and Laceby	Fare 5d.

ORDINARY RETURN TICKETS.
 Return tickets are available on Day of Issue ONLY.

LACEBY To and from BRIGHOWGATE	9d.
COTTAGERS PLOT (These Tickets are only issued up to 9-0 a.m.)	6d.
BRADLEY CROSS ROADS	4d.

PREPAID DISCOUNT TICKETS IN BUNDLES.
 12 Single Tickets (Nunsthorpe, 1st Avenue, or Cemetery), 1/-.

HUMBERSTONE AND TETNEY ROUTE. To or From.

Grimsby and Scaithoe (Lawson Cottage)	Fare 2d.
Scaithoe and Toll Bar	
Toll Bar and Humberstone Church	
Grimsby and Toll Bar	Fare 3d.
Scaithoe and Wireless Lane	
Humberstone Church and Tetney	
Grimsby and Wireless Lane	Fare 4d.
Scaithoe and Humberstone Church	
Wireless Lane and Tetney	
Grimsby and Humberstone Church	Fare 5d.
Scaithoe and Tetney	
Toll Bar and Tetney	
To and from Grimsby and Bishopthorpe	Fare 6d.
" " " Tetney	7d.

ORDINARY RETURN TICKETS.
 Return Tickets are issued up to 9-0 a.m., and are available for Return on any of the Company's Buses on Day of Issue ONLY.

To or from Grimsby and Scaithoe	3d. Return.
" " " Toll Bar	4d. "
" " " Wireless Lane	6d. "
" " " Humberstone Church	8d. "
" " " Tetney	1s. 0d. "

Provincial Offices, Cleethorpes. Tel 16. H. ORME WHITE,
 June, 1926. Manager and Engineer.

Motorised country carriers and new entrants

Existing market day services converted to motor vehicle operation from around 1918, typically using a Ford T, and slightly larger vehicles later.

Offered some improvement in frequency and days of operation, especially the services operated by new entrants to the industry

Bus services typically focused on same towns (Bourne, Sleaford, Grantham etc.) but in two cases on towns created during rail era which replaced older market towns (Skegness for Wainfleet, Scunthorpe for Winterton)



Above: Ford T EE794 of Bontoft, Middle Rasen

c1921 (borrowed from operator 1965)

Early independents still in operation (in addition to Delaine)

- Hornsbys of Ashby, Scunthorpe. Began 1914, almost certainly longest-run case of motorbus operation. Ashby - Scunthorpe service operated from then
- Grayscroft (C.W.Barker) of Mablethorpe, 1922-3
Mablethorpe – Manby - Louth service

- *Right: Chevrolet 14-seater used to inaugurate service via Manby*
- *(copy of original contact print from C.W.Barker)*



- F.Hunt of Alford (formerly a driver for Wrights),
March 1930, Alford – Spilsby – Eastville – Boston service
- Many other operators from 1920s still running in 1960s and later, but now disappeared

Early regional companies

- Clacton & District Lincolnshire ops from 1922 – radial interurban routes from Lincoln. Ran under name ‘Silver Queen’, company registered under this name 1926. Lincolnshire ops recast as Lincolnshire Road Car Co (LRCC) 1928, with headquarters at Bracebridge Heath
- Progressive Motor Omnibus Services. *Right: Progressive Straker*
Established operations at Boston 1921, *Squire DO2692, on Brigg -*
followed by branch at Scunthorpe 1922. *Scunthorpe service*
Absorbed by W. T. Underwood Ltd, along *(Philip Battersby collection)*
with E&SD (slide 13). Scunthorpe area services
to E&SD, Boston area to United (below) September 1927.
- United Automobile Services. Operations in East Anglia from 1914, and also south Lincolnshire (above), as well as North East England. Split in 1 Jan 1931, with East Anglia operations passing to Eastern Counties, and those in Lincs to Road Car.



A bus represented as relief carving in wood

A feature of St Botolph's parish church Boston (locally known as 'Boston Stump') is the wooden ceiling of the nave, restored in the late 1920s. Carved bosses represent donors of funds. That of an early bus can be seen in the centre of the view below left, the stencil (below right) making the outline clearer. 'U.B.S.' presumably refers to United Bus Services.

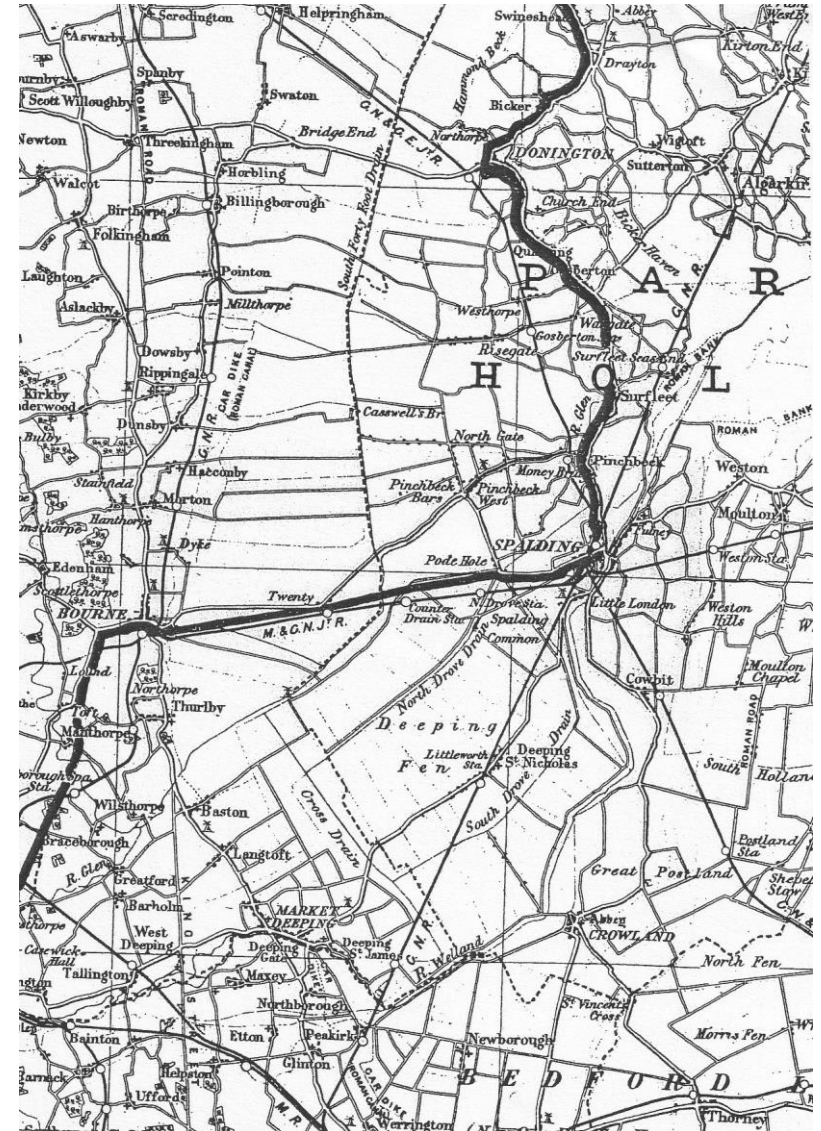


LRCC boundary definition 1929

Part of map from boundary specified when
became part of Tilling/BAT
(source: Bus Archive).

Area south and east of black line left to
United Automobile Services. Following 1931
changes, Road Car also served eastern fringe
and Spalding -Kings Lynn route, Eastern Counties
and Delaine the area to south.

Note low-density fenland zone around the South
Forty Foot Drain, drained late 18th/early 19th century
See article in PHRG journal 227 for fuller details.



Enterprise and Silver Dawn (E&SD)/Wrights

- Commenced operations in Scunthorpe area 1922 as Silver Dawn' charabanc ops of Arthur Drury, merging to become Enterprise & Silver Dawn Motors Ltd 1924. Briefly part of group owned by W T Underwood Ltd. 1925-27. Subsequently expanded through north Lincolnshire by acquisition of smaller operators.
- Major growth in steel industry drove urban growth and bus demand.
- Re-established as Enterprise (Scunthorpe) Passenger Services Ltd. 1947
- Sold to BTC 1950 with a fleet of 145, becoming the 'Northern Area' of LRCC with separate management and timetable book.
- Wright of Louth established network extending to Lincoln and Boston. Likewise, sold to BTC with fleet of 38, and incorporated in LRCC 1950

Road Car in the 1930s

- Steady expansion by acquisition following 1930 Road Traffic Act, including many local 'area' companies, e.g. Mablethorpe & Sutton M.S., Skegness M.S., Scunthorpe United M.S. (within E&SD's territory), Friskney of Horncastle, etc., a total of 46 operators between 1931 and late 1939. Some rural services may have reached peak of frequency and coverage (but not ridership) in 1939.
- Fleet remained dominated by small vehicles - only about 5 double-deckers in 1939 in a fleet of about 300

Lincoln municipal operations

- Lincoln Corporation Transport (LCT) empowered to run buses under Lincoln Corporation Act 1915, but confined within boundary
- First bus service November 1920
- Single tramway route replaced by buses 1929, growth in services as new housing estates built.
- Strong ridership growth 1940s to peak in 1950 (about 300 trips/head/year)
- Enlargement to include Birchwood area to south west early 1980s

Grimsby and Cleethorpes municipal operations (1)

- Grimsby Corporation acquired its part of GGST from Provincial in 1925, replacing one tramway route by trolleybuses 1926, and rest in 1936. First motor buses 1927.
- Provincial continued running trams in Cleethorpes, and local bus services (but some routes sold to GCT 1934).
- Cleethorpes UDC (later MB) started own bus services 1930, acquiring its part of tramway and remaining Provincial bus operations 1936, converting tramway to trolleybus 1937.
- Provincial continued as bus operator in Hampshire: H Orme White (no relation) being MD in Grimsby and Cleethorpes to 1937, and still in this role at Hoeford in 1960s.

Grimsby and Cleethorpes municipal operations (2)

- Grimsby abandoned 1926 trolleybus route in 1955
- Merger of municipal operations from 1 Jan 1957, running from Grimsby depot. Remaining trolleybus route closed 1960
- Early adopter of one-person-operation and minibuses
- Intense competition with Road Car late 1980s

Right: GCT MCW Metrorider and Road Car VRT, Victoria Street, Grimsby



Sale of municipals

- Both municipals set up 'arms length' companies under 1985 Act
- Following 1985 Act, period of strong competition between LCT and LRCC (including LCT minibuss ops in Gainsborough and Scunthorpe), but financial difficulties.
- LCT sale to Yorkshire Traction 1993 (and hence to Road Car)
- Period of competition between GCT and Road Car from 1986. Operations sold to Stagecoach 1993 for £4.4m, but unlike Lincoln highly profitable (operating margin of 9.7% in 1992-93, and return on capital of 25.3% in 1990-91) MD Les Warneford to Stagecoach, becoming UK Bus MD to 2012.

Types of journey 1: Shopping and Leisure

- No surveys to establish trip purpose as we have today, but we can infer likely purposes from timetables
- Rural services of 1920s and 1930s showed few early morning journeys suited to work or education, but often high frequency evenings and Sundays – implies substantial leisure travel (as in many other areas). Growth of cinemas, no television, employment still local.
- Timings suited to journeys to work did not emerge until later, e.g. Caistor to Grimsby post-WW2. Parallels with Norfolk case described by Ben Colson in his book 'A Journey's End' (2021)
- Subsequent decline in leisure, and later in shopping

Example of a service geared to leisure

“RELIANCE” MOTOR SERVICE

Commencing Saturday, April 3rd, 1926.

SCUNTHORPE—WEST BUTTERWICK

(Blue Bell Hotel)

SATURDAYS ONLY.

		p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	Waits Theatre	Waits Theatre
		p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.
Scunthorpe	dep.	12 45	2 45	4 15	5 40	8 45	6 30	10 30
Gunness	„	12 55	2 55	4 25	5 50	6 55	8 40	10 40
K'dby Bridge	„	1 0	3 0	4 30	5 55	7 0	8 45	10 45
Althorpe	„	1 5	3 5	4 35	6 0	7 5	8 50	10 50
Derrythorpe	„	1 10	3 10	4 40	6 5	7 10	8 55	10 55
W. Butterwick	arr.	1 20	3 20	4 50	6 10	7 20	9 5	11 5
W. Butterw'k	dep.	1 30	3 20	5 0	6 10	7 20	9 10	11 5
Derrythorpe	„	1 40	3 30	5 10	6 20	7 30	9 20	11 10
Althorpe	„	1 45	3 35	5 15	6 25	7 35	9 25	11 15
K'by Bridge	„	1 50	3 40	5 20	6 30	7 40	9 30	11 20
Gunness	„	1 55	3 45	5 25	6 35	7 45	9 35	11 25
Scunthorpe	arr.	2 10	3 55	5 35	6 40	7 55	9 45	11 35

Types of journey 2: work

- Important in urban areas from an early stage, e.g. to Docks in Grimsby, steelworks in Scunthorpe, mainly on scheduled public services
- Growth in specialised 'works bus' services, especially to locations outside towns (e.g. Humber Bank between Grimsby and Immingham), either licenced (sometimes as 'express') or free of charge to workers
- Very large catchment developed around Scunthorpe steel industry, served by mix of main operators and specialised contract services (e.g Smaller of Barton-on-Humber, Johnson of Goxhill, etc.)
- Declined following changed employment patterns and growth in car ownership
- But some recent examples, e.g. to Bakkavor fresh prepared food processing plants

Types of journey 3 : education

- Some limited provision in 1930s, but rapid growth postwar following expansion of secondary education and closure of village schools
- Lindsey County Council operated own fleet of school buses (to very basic specification) but most provision by strengthened public services at peak times, or contracted-in services.
- Scope for inter-working of school peak with market day and Saturday shopping services
- Now dominant role for bus and coach industry in many rural areas.
- Post-Covid, important to compare ridership within term-time and at other periods



Lindsey CC Bedford KFW808 at Reynolds St., Cleethorpes August 1965

(Lincolnshire Transport Review)

Road Car from 1950

Peak of demand around 1950, and also network size, following absorption of Enterprise and Wrights

Highly-standardised 'Tilling' Bristol/ECW fleet, over 100 of SC4LK model

Shift of HQ from Bracebridge Heath (works) to new bus station and depot at St Mark Street Lincoln 1959

Later contraction in south (closure of Sleaford, Boston, Grantham and Holbeach depots) with concentration in larger urban areas.

Period of intensive competition following deregulation in 1986, with independents, municipals, and also Eastern Counties on Boston town services.

Sale to Yorkshire Traction Group under privatisation 1988, then of latter to Stagecoach 2005. Absorption of LCT and GCT, with rationalisation of depots

Operation in south has resumed with transfer of Spalding – Holbeach - Kings Lynn service from Stagecoach East



Road Car network in 1950

- Principal codes:

B Bardney

C Cranwell

GA Gainsborough

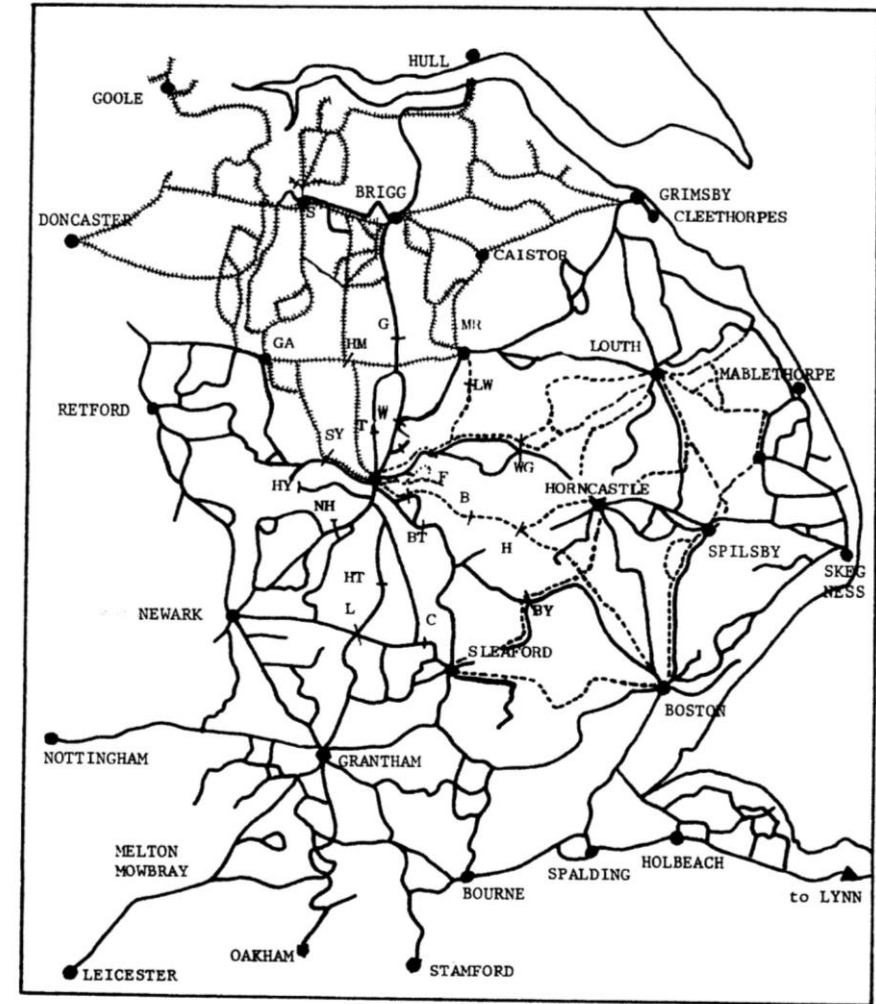
L Leadenham

MR Market Rasen

Scunthorpe

SY Saxilby

- Note that independent services not shown: many market day/Sat only, but also daily routes, e.g. Hudson's Horncastle – Bardney
Lincoln, Holme Delight's Boston - Donington – Spalding
- First published in 'Passenger Transport in Lincoln' (OS 1973)



Major Lincolnshire Bus Operators in 1950

Plain lines represent Lincs. Road Car services. hatched lines, Enterprise, and dotted lines, Wrights services.

Changes in the independent sector

Retirement of pioneer operators of the 1920s in the 1960s (e.g. Cropley of Sutterton) *Right : Lincolnshire Standard 1966 EX9777 Bedford SBG/Plaxton of 1956.*

Absorption of many operators by Appleby of Conisholme (Hudson of Horncastle, Trott of Nettleham etc.). Likewise, Kime of Folkingham (becoming a worker co-operative) took over Holme Delight and services of other operators, including some Road Car replacements

Appleby also took over operations in east Yorkshire, but eventually into administration early 2004. Coach brand name passed to Bowens Travel of Birmingham and then to Radley of Coach Travel of Brigg. Kime services passed to Brylaine and others

'Second generation' of substantially-sized independents: PC Coaches of Lincoln (established 1978) now with 125 vehicles, and Brylaine of Boston.



Mr. R. L. Cropley 25 30/9/66

SUTTERTON BUS PIONEER RETIRES

MR. R. L. Cropley, pioneer of passenger bus service in South Lincolnshire, has sold his business so that he can "relax from 45 years of hard work, without one holiday in all that time."

Mr. Cropley, who lives with his wife and daughter, Ann, at The Elms, Waterbelly Lane, Sutterton, bought the first of his buses — a 14-seater Model "T" — in 1921 when he was only 15. Previous to this he had used two horses and a wagon.

sold the business, Mr. Cropley owned a fleet of five buses travelling between Sutterton and Boston, Holbeach and Spalding.

TO WORK LAND

The business has been sold to Mr. T. F. Groom, of Long Sutton, but Mr. Cropley is continuing to take bookings for private hire from the public. He also has interests

Rail closures

- Further closures from 1950s, culminating in East Lincs line (Grimsby – Louth – Alford – Boston - Spalding – Peterborough) and associated branches in 1970.
- In some cases, buses already provided parallel alternative, e.g. Lincoln – Grantham, but not in others (East Lincs). Replacements often provided to meet localised cases of ‘hardship’, rather than based on strategic potential of improved interurban links, and often short-lived (parallels with Norfolk case)
- Some stations reopened, and also Spalding - Peterborough line.
- Suggested recreation of Boston - Spalding link in 2021.

InterConnect network

- Commenced 1999, funded through Rural Bus Challenge.
- Most services operated by Road Car, two independent
- Hourly (or better) frequencies
- Strong ridership growth, especially on Lincoln - Horncastle – Skegness
- Most journeys commercially viable up to Covid
- Dedicated livery largely dropped, but reintroduced recently on Kings Lynn - Spalding route

Right: Road Car Scania 15655 in InterConnect colours at Harmston on service 1, 28 August 2014 (Paul Hill)



Interconnect network map 2011

- Interconnect services in bold colour lines
- 'I' symbol represents interchange with CallConnect DRT services

All run by LRCC except Lincoln – Boston (Brylaine)

Brylaine also run on Boston – Skegness

Core network same today, but other services changed

Louth - Horncastle is semi-fixed, with requested diversions from route as shown



Call Connect services

- Launched with Interconnect 1999
- Mix of fixed routes and DRT (then 'Call Connect Plus'), almost all now DRT and simply known as 'Call Connect'

About 300,000 trips p.a. prior to Covid
Attains coverage of areas not served by fixed routes (almost all of county, apart from small area around Lincoln)



Above: A Call Connect Plus 8-seater at Spilsby interchange

August 2002 (PRW)

Operator market shares

- From BSIPs Oct 2021, in terms of vehicle-km on registered public services

	North Lincs ^(a)	NE Lincs ^(b)	Lincs ^(c)
• Stagecoach	81%	99.96%	54%
• Hornsbys	19%	-	-
• Other operators	-	0.04%	46%

(a) From BSIP, pp 10-16. Shares shown of combined Stagecoach and Hornsby total; also small operations by East Yorks (fixed route, and DRT) and Isle Coaches

(b) From BSIP, p17. Non-Stagecoach share comprises section within council area of two return journeys per week on shopping services. Very high overall share due to acquisition of both municipal and Road Car operations, and winning contracts for rural services

(c) BSIP does not give bus-km, but lists 27 operators running a total of 275 services (pp12-13), of which Stagecoach comprises 31%. However, it is likely that the Stagecoach share of bus-km was far higher, as many of the independent services were probably registered school operations. An earlier estimate for 2015-16 from DfT Table 1001b 'Operator market share of weekly bus trips by local authority area, England' is shown. In this case, the second largest operator (at 19%) was a contractor for the 'Call Connect' demand-responsive minibus services, running much smaller vehicles than Stagecoach, and hence a much smaller share of capacity and ridership than Stagecoach.

- Overall, passengers carried would be a better indicator of market share than services provided, but such data are not published

References: own works by Peter White (as sole author unless otherwise stated)

- Chapter 5 'Roads replace Railways' in D.R.Mills (ed) Twentieth Century Lincolnshire. History of Lincolnshire Committee, Lincoln 1989 (see also chapter 6 by Holliss on RAF, and other themes)
- 'Scartho and the Motor Bus' Omnibus Magazine October 1969, pp 187-190
- Passenger Transport in Lincoln (OS 1973) – covers history of Lincoln Corporation and Road Car to that date
- A History of Bus and Coach Services in North-West Lincolnshire (OS 1983) - covers E&SD and independents
- Entries re Enterprise, Lincs Road Car and Grimsby-Cleethorpes in 'Companion to Road Passenger Transport History', R&RTHA 2013
- Chapter 15 'The roles of 'conventional' and demand-responsive bus services' in C.Mulley and J.Nelson (eds) Paratransit: Shaping the Flexible Transport Future' Emerald, Bingley 2016.
- With Jim Steer and Dylan Luke 'Interurban Bus: Time to Raise the Profile' Greengauge21, 2018 (available at www.greengauge21.net) – InterConnect case study pp57-62 and A6-A7.

References: other publications

- 'Provincial in Grimsby' Stewart Brett, Christopher Richardsen and David Whittaker. The Provincial Society, 2016
- 'Lincolnshire Road Car 75' Graham Wise, NBC Books 2003
- Also, numerous fleet histories published by PSV Circle and others