



Enfield Museum, Local Studies
and Library Service
www.enfield.gov.uk

London Borough of Enfield Local History Sheets.

Buses in Enfield a brief history



Before the arrival of the railways, passenger traffic to and from Enfield and Edmonton was largely in the hands of the short stage coach. (From the eighteen-thirties onwards these vehicles were progressively replaced by the larger-bodied horse omnibuses). Enfield was also served by long distance stage coaches travelling along the Hertford Road. In 1826 coaches passed through Enfield on their way from London to Boston, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Fakenham, Kings Lynn, Stamford, Wisbech and York. By travelling via Enfield, Royston and Huntingdon, it was possible to avoid Highgate Hill and Barnet Hill on the Great North Road.

In 1790 Thomas Kimpton's coaches were making six return journeys daily between the Golden Lion at Edmonton Green and the Bull Inn, Bishopsgate. His rival, James Dickenson was making five return journeys daily between Enfield Town and London, calling at the Bull Inn, Bishopsgate and the Castle and Falcon, Aldersgate.

By 1825 there were seventeen coaches operating between London and Edmonton, making thirty-nine return journeys daily. Five coaches were operating between London and Ponders End, making three return journeys daily. Just one vehicle was operating between London and Southgate, managing one return journey daily.

By 1839 there were four operators between Edmonton and Bishopsgate. Mr J Willis was operating two omnibuses and one stage coach. Messrs. S and J Isaac had three omnibuses and two coaches. Joseph St John had three omnibuses and one coach. William Matthews jun. had just one coach.

Three operators were plying between Edmonton and Snow Hill (Holborn). William Matthews sen. had one omnibus and two coaches. William Matthews jun. had one coach. Robert Winder of Edmonton Green had one coach. In addition, Mr E Gibbons was operating one omnibus and two coaches between Edmonton and the Bank of England. John and William Glover were operating three omnibuses and two coaches between Enfield Town and Bishopsgate. William Pickard and William Mathews sen. were each operating one coach between Southgate and Snow Hill. Mr W Wright was operating one coach between Enfield Wash and Bishopsgate.

The first railway line in Enfield (the Lea Valley Line) was opened between Stratford and Broxbourne in 1840. The Line was built along the floor of the valley in order to save engineering costs. As a result, the stations (apart from Ponders End) were all sited well away from the built up areas. The horse bus services (other than at Ponders End) were largely unaffected. In 1845 there were buses every fifteen minutes from 8.00am to 8.30pm between Edmonton and the City. In Enfield Town the Glover brothers were making seven return journeys daily to the City. Southgate was served by Abraham Catchfield and William Pickard. Catchfield was making two return journeys daily and Pickard just one.

By 1860 railway competition was beginning to bite. The opening of a branchline to Enfield Town in 1849 had put the Glover brothers out of business. By 1867 the only bus operating in Enfield ran from The Goat, Forty Hill to Enfield Town station. However at Edmonton at this date buses were running to the City from the Angel every fifteen minutes between 8.00am and

9.30pm. A shuttle service between the Angel and Northumberland Park station, which was operating in 1855, appears to have been very short-lived. At Southgate, Pickard was still making one return journey to the City daily. However, there was now a shuttle service from the Rising Sun in Chase Side to and from New Southgate station.

The opening of the Great Northern Railway's Enfield branch (1871) and the Great Eastern Railway's direct line to Enfield via Hackney Downs (1872) dealt a death blow to horse buses on the longer distance routes. By 1874 Edmonton's bus services had been killed off by Railway competition. In Southgate, Pickard was still managing one return journey daily to the City. By 1882 even this service had gone. The only surviving services were between Forty Hill and Enfield Town station and between Southgate (Avenue Road) and Palmers Green station.

The service between Southgate and Palmers Green station survived until 1912, when it was killed off by competition from Motor Buses. In 1912 the London General Omnibus Company brought the first Motor Buses into the Enfield area when the route no.29 was extended from Wood Green to the Cherry Tree, Southgate.

Further Reading

Barker T C and Robbins Michael - A History of London Transport: Vol.1: The Nineteenth Century. London 1963.

Sekon G A - Locomotion in Victorian London. Oxford 1938.

Day John R - The Story of the London Bus. London 1973.

Hill Albert - Seventy-two Years in Tottenham. Tottenham 1899.

Cresswell Henrietta - Winchmore Hill: memories of a lost village. Dumfries 1912.

Contains eyewitness account of a journey by horse bus from Bishopsgate to Winchmore Hill.

Details of early bus services can be found in various editions of Pigot's, Robson's and Kelly's directories.