

Integrated Transport - a Will-o'-the-wisp?

Contributed by John Wylde

Integrated Transport – a Will-o'-the-wisp? A view of inland transport development in Great Britain during the 20th century John Wylde MSc FCILT

This book was inspired by the mysterious disappearance of the slogan 'Integrated transport' which had been on government documents such as the 1998 White Paper, and the daughter documents and 10-year Plan which followed it. The Transport Act 2000 contained only a few positive legislative advances compared with the many aspirations of the White Paper, suggesting that the government were nervous of the response of voters at the 2001 election to their transport policies. The idea of integrated transport was used in legislation for most of the 20th century (often the term used was co-ordinated transport), but never did it seem to be achievable, because of the different interpretations of 'integration', and often of political ideology and vested interests. The author reviews the progress of all forms of inland transport during the century, with the help of two acknowledged experts in their field, and of some others who have acted willingly as research assistants. The important events in the development of inland transport have been captured in the chapters covering the decades of the century, to a large extent objectively, but it is an annotated view, the author not entirely refraining from comment. The final chapter refers to aspects of public transport provision after the millennium much more critically. [CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)

Extracts from reviews ... this is an essential exposition on transport in Britain yesterday and today, which needs to be on the shelf of every serious student of UK transport. Oliver Howarth in Omnibus Magazine, the journal of the Omnibus Society. This is ... an important text for anyone concerned with transport. It is a very useful book. ... what do we mean by those tricky words 'integration' and 'co-ordination'? ... the author goes to the heart of the matter. He finds three definitions of integrated transport; ... The author is unafraid to tackle controversy, which is in itself one reason why the book makes such good reading. The author's ability to record and criticise what has happened is outstanding. Anyone with a serious interest in the transport industry should get it and read it, and keep it to hand for reference. Professor John Hibbs OBE PhD, Aston University, for the Roads and Road Transport History Association and Economic Affairs journal. ... an excellent summary of public transport in the 20th century which demonstrates how opportunities to develop an integrated public transport system in Britain have repeatedly presented themselves and equally repeatedly been cast aside. Comprehensive, frustrating, absorbing and depressing. Train-on-line, magazine of the Association of Community Rail Partnerships. ... road classifications, ferries, railway competition, buses and how they all interact with each other ... the various Acts of Parliament, all explained in a relaxed and enjoyable way, including the massive and often conflicting changes on the railways. ... this book ... will take any reader to a new level of understanding about what is meant by integration. David Bowker in The Norbury & South London Transport Club magazine. When I grew up ... on the southern fringes of London in the 1960s, we had a little bus which went to Orpington. It was a pioneering community bus, although that term had not been coined at the time, and the controlling mind ... was John Wylde (who) has written a book in the elusive subject of Integrated Transport, and if ever there were a university course on the subject ... this would be the standard text.

I researched the Beeching axe recently for the BBC, and should have used this book, which summarises the whole issue of the 1960s rail closures in three pages. Road freight and rail freight, domestic aviation and waterways all feature, together with useful sub-headings on social context ... and the whole book is peppered with useful facts, sensibly marshalled in readable style. ... moves to establish a Green Belt around London ... created a particular problem for the Southern Railway which was building a station at Lullingstone ... for houses to be developed around. The station had to be mothballed and was later demolished, since there was only a single house in the vicinity. Only a tenacious writer like John could have found out who owned the house ... This book unpacks the development of integrated transport, from measures to co-ordinate transport in London as early as 1905, to the development of municipal tram and trolleybus networks, charting their rise and fall and recent rise, through to the work of Journey Solutions in the current decade. Chapters are well laid out in sub-sections, and there are both detailed contents pages and an informative index to the 184 pages. Unusually for such a book I did not find a single typographical error in the entire work. Alex Nelson FCILT.

Comments by readers

I do not know of any other work which attempts to cover all forms of inland transport in Great Britain. (Christopher Gibbard)

Very comprehensive. (Ian Manderson)

Fascinating. (Jonathan Cowe)

I found the book a good and interesting read. I liked the chronological approach, which I think is particularly useful for students ... it will be a very useful reference for me to turn to to refresh myself about what I spent my life doing! (Bob Bixby)

... a very well-written treatise on public transport developments across the country during the twentieth century, combined with a shrewd analysis of the ... influences behind much of the decision-making. (Philip Wallis)

Anyone interested in knowing how the transport network came to be where it is today should refer to this work. I have found the book invaluable as a source of information. The detail concerning development of the bus industry is particularly impressive. This book must have taken many, many hours of meticulous research – and it shows! (Ian Clarke)

This is a comprehensive overview of the transport system in Britain and, perhaps more importantly, how it has come to be the way it is. The fact that no corner of the country has been overlooked makes it an important work in its field, and it shows a real understanding of the difficulties faced by rural communities as well as large cities. (Eleanor Harris, Local Studies Librarian, Argyll & Bute)

Succinct, comprehensive and very easy to read…;the history and background to so many things was enlightening…;it’s a fantastic piece of work…; (Peter Larking)

A very useful work of reference. (Peter Townley)

…; a really good informative read. (Trevor Adams)

Integrated Transport – a Will-o’-the-wisp? A view of inland transport development in Great Britain during the 20th century John Wylde MSc FCILT Published by John D.Wylde
4 Osborne Road Tweedmouth Berwick-upon-Tweed TD15 2HS Copyright © John D.Wylde 2007 ISBN 978-0-9533502-3-0
The second edition, revised in October 2007, incorporates some corrections, revisions and additions About the author
John Wylde began his career in public transport in the offices of London Transport, both Central Road Services and Country Buses, just after the loss of the trams in 1952. After training and while practising as a teacher in the sixties, he was instrumental in creating and operating what was probably the first Community Bus scheme before forming a partnership to operate then-unconventional minibuses on conventional bus routes. He became Public Transport Officer of two county councils (before and after the 1974 reorganisation of local government), after which he took advantage of the deregulation of bus services in 1986 to operate taxibuses, and acted as a rural transport consultant for the Rural Development Commission. After ‘retirement’ he wrote his memoirs (Wylde’s Adventures in Busland) and Wylde’s Reflections on Public Transport, which he is now revising, combining and enlarging under the title ‘Experiments in Public Transport Operation’, and then went to Oxford Brookes University to obtain the qualifications with which he should properly have begun his career (MSc in Transport Planning). Following completion of his course he felt the need for a book to help young entrants to the transport industry, or those anxious to study how we have arrived at the present situation, as the intention of the incoming government in 1997 to ‘integrate’ transport seems to have proved almost as elusive as previous attempts, of which there were several in the last century. To match his practical experience of road passenger transport he has a lifelong interest in railways, his father having been in railway offices and his son having ‘hands-on’ experience of freight and test-train operation. He is a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (UK).

Author’s note The book starts with the words “Many people are interested in transport”, and for some people it goes beyond a consuming interest and becomes a passion. Most people with any degree of interest have opinions about what has been done, what is being done, and what should be done about the problems posed in the quest for integrated transport. It was inspired by the mysterious disappearance of the slogan ‘Integrated Transport’ which had been on government documents such as the 1998 White Paper, and the daughter documents and 10-Year Plan which followed it. The Transport Act 2000 contained only a few positive legislative advances compared with the many aspirations of the White Paper, suggesting that the government were nervous of the response of voters at the 2001 election to their transport policies. The idea of integrated transport was used in legislation for most of the 20th century (often the term used was co-ordinated transport), but never did it seem to be achievable, because of the different interpretations of ‘integration’, and often of political ideology and vested interests. There are two familiar descriptions of the unattainable. One is the search for the crock of gold at the end of the rainbow, and the other is the nocturnal equivalent, the Will-o’-the-wisp. Whatever the scientific explanation of ‘lights in the night’ (fireflies, marsh lights, etc), the old belief was that Will was very much a spirit of the night, dancing along, always just out of reach, luring people on to follow the lights to find – what? To pursue the analogy, during the twentieth century it may be thought that we were stumbling in the dark, seeking but never finding the solution to the problems of transport, but always believing that the ideal is integrated, or co-ordinated, transport – whatever that is. We never seem to be quite sure what it is. As we begin the next century, the ideal which we seek still seems to be unattainable, but the quest is becoming more scientific. Transport professionals have now developed their own mystique and language to enable them to bamboozle the rest of us who just want simple solutions, which is a trick the lawyers learned centuries ago, but can they catch up with Will in the twenty-first century? I have tried to be objective in the central chapters, which are not numbered but arranged by the decades of the century. I hope I have caught most of the major events, but the book is a potted history, so my view is inevitably selective, an annotated view of history, and I have not refrained from comment, especially in the final chapter. Whether readers agree with my opinions is irrelevant, so long as they stimulate debate.

Synopsis

* Acknowledgements

- * Foreword by Professor David Begg, first chairman of the government-appointed Commission for Integrated Transport
- * Integrated Transport – a Will-o’-the-wisp? Subject matter, form and conventions of the book.
- * A Century of Opportunity. A review of developments during the century.
- * The First Decade of the 20th Century. The railway network almost at its zenith and road motor transport in its infancy, with bus companies beginning to be established.
- * The Second Decade. The bus groups developing. Government control of the railways during the First World War. The formation of the Ministry of Transport in 1919.
- * The Twenties. The Roads Act 1920 classifying the roads. The Railways Act 1921 grouping the railways in 1923. The London Traffic Act 1924. The Railway (Road Transport) Acts 1928 giving the railways powers to run buses and lorries, the struggle with the bus companies and the loss of a major opportunity to integrate transport. The Railway (Air Transport) Acts 1929 giving the railways similar powers to operate air services. The Royal Commission on Transport.
- * The Thirties. The Road Traffic Act 1930 (licensing of public service vehicles and regular bus and coach services by the Traffic Commissioners). The London Passenger Transport Act 1933 (creating London Transport). The Road and Rail Traffic Act 1933 (the freight equivalent of the 1930 Act).
- * The Forties. The reorganisation of the main bus groups, 1942. The Transport Act 1947, nationalising the railways and their peripheral interests (hotels, docks & inland waterways) and creating the framework to nationalise road transport, but with little emphasis on service integration.
- * The Fifties. The reversal of policy after the general election in 1951. The Transport Act 1953, de-nationalising road haulage and stopping further nationalisation of road passenger transport. The British Railways Modernisation Plan 1955.
- * The Sixties. The Transport Act 1962, which dismantled the British Transport Commission and gave transport responsibilities to autonomous Boards responsible directly to the Minister. Dr Beeching’s 1963 report ‘The Re-shaping of British Railways’. The general elections of 1964 and 1966, again reversing policy direction and resulting in the first revenue support for public transport (in London in 1965). The Transport Act 1968 creating Passenger Transport Authorities in the major urban areas other than London, setting up the National Bus Company and Scottish Transport Group, and beginning the involvement of local authorities with public transport. The Transport (London) Act 1969 transferring much responsibility for London Transport to the Greater London Council, but Country Buses to the National Bus Company.
- * The Seventies. The Local Government Act 1972, implemented in 1974, imposing on county councils a duty to co-ordinate transport. The link between transport and land-use planning becoming established. The general election in 1979 leading to another major reversal of policy direction which took effect in the 1980s and 1990s.
- * The Eighties. The Transport Act 1980, de-regulating long distance coach services and bus fares. The Transport Act 1985, de-regulating local bus services outside London, dismantling the nationalised bus undertakings, privatisation of operators including municipals, and changing the duty of county councils. Starting to prepare the operational departments of London Transport for privatisation.
- * The Nineties. The Railways Act 1993, privatising the railways. The privatisation of the London bus companies in 1994. The General Election in 1997 bringing in ‘New Labour’. The White Paper on transport in 1998, emphasising Integrated Transport, followed by the 10-Year Plan and the Transport Act in 2000.
- * The Millennium – Quo Vadis? Some of the ways in which initiatives begun in the 20th Century are being taken forward into the 21st Century, and criticism of some aspects of current public transport provision.
- * Appendix. Transport in the South-west Highlands.

Extract from foreword by Professor David Begg

‘Integrated Transport – a Will-o’-the-wisp?’ is an excellent modern history of British transport. This book will be of interest, not just to transport professionals, students and academics; it will also be of interest to a wider audience.

Integrated Transport – a Will-o’-the-wisp? Many people are interested in transport, because it is something we almost all have to use in some form or other. For most people it is nothing more than a means to an end, for a few it is a professional interest, while some find the subject (or a part of it) a consuming passion.

Users simply want to know how to go about in the simplest, cheapest, most convenient way. Higher degree students of transport planning are preparing for a career in some branch of the transport industry. Enthusiasts who congregate at the ends of railway station platforms, or ride in the front seats on the top deck of buses to spot those coming the other way, are pursuing a hobby studying one aspect of transport.

This book offers a potted history of transport development in Great Britain through the last century. It is intended to help those whose interest in the subject is sufficient to want to undertake a course of study, or embark on a career in one of

its branches. Many young people interested in or involved with public transport today can hardly remember British Rail, let alone the National Bus Company or the Scottish Bus Group, and they will be better placed to learn more and do their job well if they have some idea how we have arrived at the present situation.

This is not a text book, nor a definitive history of transport. It aims to give an impression of how transport has developed over the last century, without over-burdening readers with statistical or financial comparisons. It is intended to be easy to read rather than hard to study.

The title questions whether integrated transport is a *Will-o'-the-wisp*, which means something misleading or elusive. The idea of integrated transport receives universal approval until the question of what is meant by integration is discussed, when it becomes apparent that the various forms of integration are largely mutually-exclusive, and the various political and commercial interests make the achievement of any of them difficult. The most elusive form of public transport integration in Britain is that which would most obviously benefit the users, though our continental neighbours afford it a higher priority, and achieve some success.

Throughout the narrative there are opportunities to consider whether individual events were positive moves towards the integration of transport, or a hindrance to it, and the consideration must extend to the sort of integration they were promoting or hindering.

During the last century the concept of close association of different forms of transport was described either as integration or co-ordination. It may seem like semantics to differentiate between them, but there is a subtle difference, which is explored in the first chapter, with the different meanings and interpretations of the term Integrated Transport.

THE SUBJECT MATTER Integrated (or co-ordinated) transport is a term which has been used for many years to express the inter-action of the various forms of transport, and it came to prominence again right at the end of the twentieth century. There has been a divergence of views as to its importance, and sometimes even its desirability, but this book aims to help readers appreciate what it is that should, or should not, be integrated.

At the beginning of the century, motoring was in its infancy and almost everybody who could travel at all was dependent to some extent on public transport, of which the railway was the most developed form. Many of the poorer people could not afford to use any form of transport, never straying further from home than they could walk. A century later many of us have become largely dependent on motorised road transport to meet most of our personal needs and to enable our economy to function.

For some this is simply a matter of choosing an appropriate car and using it as necessary to fulfil our business needs and social desires. For others this is not an option, for a variety of reasons; in many areas it is now becoming frustratingly difficult to do so, and there is a growing awareness that there has to be a balance between private and public transport. However, the proliferation of private cars is not merely indicative of the freedom that they confer upon their users, but is an indictment of the failure of public transport to meet many of the day-to-day needs of ordinary people.

Public transport has become uneconomic to provide in many situations, and in those cases transport provision is dependent upon government decisions of one sort or another affecting what is provided and how, and who pays. This book includes some achievements and many lost opportunities in the context of the political and legislative changes which occurred during the last century. The various Acts of Parliament are noted, and sample statistics are included as necessary to illustrate trends, but without detailed analysis of financial matters. Suffice it to say that legislation is designed to advance the situation current at the time, while financial considerations are often the cause of its failure or ineffectiveness. The insistence by British politicians that public transport is a business rather than a service is met with blank incomprehension by our neighbours in Europe.

Politics is the way of achieving things, and the policies of the political parties are very different on the surface, but their treatment of transport is often much less different in practice. Politicians have to distinguish between what can be controlled or fundamentally changed and what can only be influenced. Observations made in the course of this review should not be interpreted as political comment in any way other than in connection with transport policies. Some subjects are mentioned very briefly, not because they do not deserve fuller treatment but because either they are covered adequately elsewhere or because they are peripheral to the intention of this work, which is to give the reader an overall view or flavour of the development of inland transport during the last century, in the hope that this will lead to more informed policy-making and practical application in the future. An example is the Special Roads Act 1949, which had a profound effect on transport development in the second half of the century, but is not generally of compelling interest. In some cases subjects are expanded more than may be strictly necessary in the belief that the overall view or flavour is enhanced by the wider interest in which certain aspects of transport history are held. Many aspects of railway development come into this category.

Railways are such a large subject that a succinct history of their development through the twentieth century is a matter of the finest distinction between too much detail and too little. The railways were so important at the beginning of the century that it is necessary to explain as fully as possible how they came into being and established themselves as a unified force composed of so many individual entities by that time. Some railway topics have been selected for more detailed consideration than others from the published material listed in the bibliography, which is only a tiny fraction of what has been written on the subject.

Although a great deal is said about railways, this is a book about the action and inter-action of all forms of internal transport in Great Britain, though it has been necessary to confine the detail of road freight, sea and internal air transport to their place in an integrated transport system. The land based passenger forms attract the greatest attention in the quest for integration, while presenting the greatest difficulties in practical achievement.

The review is confined to Great Britain (not the UK because so much of the transport history and legislation of Northern Ireland is fundamentally different from GB), with occasional reference to other parts of the world by way of comparison.

THE FORM AND CONVENTIONS OF THE BOOK The book describes trends and major incidents in transport development during the twentieth century within a chronological framework, the decades forming the chapters. Within each chapter there are sections on Legislation, Roads, Waterways, Freight, Railways, Trams and Trolleybuses, London Transport, and Passenger Road Transport outside London, as far as possible in that order for the sake of consistency. Ferries, shipping and internal air services, however, tend to defy logic and may appear near the beginning or right at the end of the decade chapters. When legislation was enacted towards the end of a decade, its description is at least begun in the relevant chapter and continues in the following chapter. This occurs with the Ministry of Transport Act 1919, the Railways Acts of 1928 and 1929, and the Transport (London) Act 1969.

References to other works include the title and the author in italics. Full details are contained in the bibliography. When reference to the same work is made again shortly afterwards, the author's name is repeated rather than 'ibid'. Verbatim quotations from other works are shown in italics rather than quotation marks (with apologies to the purists).

Integrated Transport – a Will-o'-the-wisp? A view of inland transport development in Great Britain during the 20th century John Wylde MSc FCILT Internet version www.john-wylde.co.uk price £9.50, payable on-line. **BUY PRINTED BOOK NOW**

through the 'BUY NOW' page or by post at £14.95 (post paid)

Send £-sterling cheque payable to John Wylde to

4 Osborne Road Berwick-upon-Tweed TD15 2HS.

Copies will be despatched when cheques have cleared. Don't delay – act today

Coming soon by the same author Experiments in Public Transport Operation Experiments in Public Transport Operation is planned for production, price to be advised. It is a review of unconventional forms of public transport, the author's personal experiences being supplemented by sections relating to other uses of minibuses, postbuses, dial-a-ride, flexibly-routed buses, and recent road and rail experiments. Experiments in Public Transport Operation is based on the author's first books, Wylde's Adventures in Busland, and Wylde's Reflections on Public Transport, which were published in 1998.