

My Adventure With Tillings Transport (BTC) Ltd.

By Bob Beaumont.

It was suggested that I write a filler on my "Tilling Summer" but I felt it worth recording the whole experience for posterity.

TT was a small remnant of the once mighty operator Thomas Tilling, horse and motor bus service provider in London who, with the coming of the LPTB and regulation, left London and continued in the provinces, finishing I believe in Brighton.

The office had been for a long time at 238A Grays Inn Road but had moved to a temporary site on cleared land in Euston Square opposite Euston Station. The garage, which I only went to once, was off Grays Inn Road [in Omega Place, the former Hearn's building which still exists, between Northdown Street and Caledonian Road north of Pentonville Road].

The fleet of about 30 coaches was a mixture of AEC and Bristol. The AECs were Regal IIIs re-bodied in full front by ECW, and Regal IVs with ECW bodies originally the same as the RFW coaches in the LT fleet but rebodied with MW-style bodies. The Bristols were LLs, LSs and MWs. There were also four baggage vans, which had to go with some of the American parties due to the amount of luggage

The Tilling style livery was smart - cream with black bands/wings and gold fleet names. The vans were red with black wings and gold fleet names.

In June - I think it was 1961 - I was working in what was known as the General Section of the Traffic Manager's Office at Eastern National at New Writtle Street, Chelmsford. It was titled "General" as it did the work that did not fit the other sections, namely fare tables, refunds, lost property and the employment of drivers and conductors. Applications came in, references were obtained and approval or otherwise given. With the latter came verifying PSV Licence applications and renewals.

I was told there was a serious staff shortage at the Tilling office and I would be working there and staying in London for the rest of the summer. I was further told that, as a young single man, it would be a good experience and help to complete my education. At the time I thought the experience would be coach operation, but having got there and wandered round neighbouring King's Cross looking for red buses I saw more red lights over doors than red traffic lights and realised there could have been a double meaning! After staying one very noisy and sleepless night in a small hotel opposite the vehicle entrance to Euston Station I decided to commute.

With a manager and only two other staff the place was nothing short of a madhouse. My work was mainly to give private hire quotations over the phone and write out an endless number of drivers' work tickets. At busy times I was also trying to cover work, as far more was taken on that there were coaches for - Saturday hires were sometimes sublet at a loss in order to get them covered. Some Fridays I was still covering Saturdays until 2000, and had to go in on Saturday to cover Sunday and Monday.

When DDs were required - usually on Saturdays for large factory outings arriving in London by chartered train - it was necessary to collect them from EN's Chelmsford (CF) or Brentwood (BD) depots. A Tilling part time driver (often a day time LCC school bus driver) would go by train to collect an FLF, leaving it at Wood Green (WG) overnight, do the job on Saturday and return it Saturday evening or Sunday. I once went to Paddington to supervise a seven FLF job and was not pleased when one rolled in showing Chelmsford 32. On telling the driver to change the blind quickly he asked me how to do it, and added he had never driver a double decker before meaning he had only a single deck licence [the two were separate at the time]. I said I didn't hear that, knowing I would never find a DD driver in time.

Another incident was when a driver took off with the wrong large van, meaning that a load of luggage was heading for Stratford upon Avon instead of a liner sailing from Southampton. It wasn't realised for two hours until the second large driver came in. No mobiles and only the police had radio, so I phoned every force up the A40 to look out for a Tilling van and turn it to Southampton. Similarly I asked the AA to put boards outside their boxes, one of which the driver saw and a rather serious mistake was corrected in time.

It was a very hectic summer, and in today's terms a steep learning curve in many kinds of initiative, such as covering the large amount of weekend work as already mentioned. It continued to my holiday date in mid September, following which I had been told to return to EN. The Tilling Manager (who had earlier come from the EN Midland Area) said otherwise, that I was to go back, but I never saw him again!

My Adventures With Tillings Transport Ltd, by Bob Beaumont, continued

Change of Tilling Livery

One of the MW coaches was painted at Central Works with half of the front, one side and half the rear from cream and black to endel red and pearl grey. The directors looked it at and a change must have been agreed.

Derby Day

Look at a photo of the finishing line area in the 1960s and a motley collection of pre and post war (mainly Tilling Group) open topers will be seen in use as grandstands. This operation was carried out in the name of Tillings, but the behind the scenes work was done at EN Head Office during the winter. The OT's were from as far away as North Wales and the Yorkshire Coast and arrived in London the day before. They had to be fuelled, stabled and cleaned to the highest degree for this prestigious operation in a military style. On the day, the EN CF recovery vehicle was on standby at WG to cover any breakdowns north of the Thames and a similar vehicle hired from LT covered south of the river. If the going was soft, as the expression goes, the EN vehicle went to the course should towing off the grass become necessary.

In this early style of what we now know as corporate entertainment the guests of Hoover were the tops. They rode to the course not in the elderly OTs but the best Tilling coaches, with their OTs going via the J Lyons Food Factory to be loaded with hampers!



What a period picture! It would drive social historians wild!! Round the back of the old Tillings Kings cross depot! Chris Stewart is researching another article about this site and so we will save further details until he is ready. Meanwhile, who knows what the vehicles are! I know they are not a Scania and a Volvo!

EBEG collection.