

Anthony Spindler – my experiences in the bus industry

compiled/edited by Richard Delahoy

We recorded the sad passing of former member Anthony Spindler in our June 2022 issue. Back In 2015 he gave a talk at one of our meetings about his career with Eastern National and, latterly, Thamesway. He was following the footsteps of his father, Fred Spindler who started with National. The following is an edited version of the notes he sent us for his talk, with additional material as noted.

"My father was born in Canterbury and wanted to work on the Southern Railway but failed the medical. After a time working in an auctioneer's office, he joined the National Omnibus & Transport Company at Brompton Road (over the Brompton Road Underground station) in 1931". John Taylor (a long-time bus historian) recalls that Fred Spindler was National's chief clerk there. By 1931, National had been split into the three territorial companies, Eastern, Western and Southern National, and John noted that Fred was very much involved with their applications for Road Service Licences in 1931 (under the newly enacted 1930 Road Traffic Act). NOTC itself had acted as a holding company since the three territorial companies had been established with 50% railway company shareholdings, but Brompton Road also then provided management and accountancy services to ENOC, WNOC & SNOC. Then in May 1932 Fred was transferred to Eastern National's HQ at Chelmsford working under Frank Bryan.

After working on Road Service Licence applications under the very restrictive rules that the 1930 Act had introduced, involving applications to the Traffic Commissioners, he also worked on schedules during the wartime. Later he moved to the publicity section and was Publicity Superintendent until his death in May 1969.

Returning to Anthony's story: "Although my father was much against me joining (therefore to be in close contact with him), he had to surrender and I started with Eastern National on 5 October 1964, in the Road Service Licencing department with Mr Farage (Traffic Assistant, Licencing), Bob Beaumont and Peter Stobart. We were under Robert Hanley, the Traffic Manager. I stayed in that section to Easter 1965 when I moved to the Bus Station, Duke Street, under Arthur Allan, the Chief Inspector, Central. I did late and early reports and absences and also went with out with Arthur looking at new estates being built, for bus routes to be planned. Generally I learnt the practical workings of a depot and inspector. I was transferred back to Head Office on 9 March 1966 and had a spell in the Extended Coach Tour Department for the summer 1966 season under Mr Morley, working with Mr Fenton and Ced Harris, Miss Ketley and Susan, Mr Morley's secretary. I dealt with drivers' instructions, luggage labels, etc. Then on 19 September 1966 I moved to the Road Service Licencing (RSL) Department to take Peter Stobart's position. In September 1974 my title was made Traffic Assistant, Licencing, but in July 1990 it was altered to Traffic Assistant as I took on a host of other tasks.

I carried on with RSL work through that time, working with David Whiteside and Bob Beaumont. Bob had worked at Halstead and Braintree depots for a while but returned to Head Office in April 1973 on Mr Farage's retirement, becoming Licencing Officer and later Planning Officer. In mid-1973 I then took on the traffic side of accident reports from Tom Taylor in the General Section (he had previously been a driver and then inspector). From 1983 my work on accident reports was expanded to liaise with the Traffic Dept, Company Secretary and the insurance company, SMT, after the person in the secretarial department who handled that work was made redundant. I had those extra tasks until I could not cope with all the work and it passed to the Engineers Assistant. I would receive accident reports from the depots, put on an accident number and send them to SMT Insurance in Norwich for them to deal with. I would enter them in a ledger and keep a copy of the report. SMT would send notifications when they wanted to know the cost of the accident so I would send these to the engineer of the depot concerned and he would send back details of the cost, ie parts and labour and I would add on £55 a day for loss of use of the bus if the accident was a serious one. SMT would also send me queries to sort out, which went the same way to the Engineer or Traffic for that depot, and then a reply sent to Norwich.

Then I also took up stationery once a week (in a room in the driver training school yard), tickets to agents, safe driving awards, etc from the Secretarial Department when the man in the post room who had done it was dispensed with. This I all dealt with in between doing RSL work. So it was a hard life. I continued in the RSL department until the 1985 Transport Act (which swept away all the old procedures followed since 1931, to be replaced by service registrations). I dealt with Highwayman and express coach services registrations, while stage carriage services would be completed by Schedules as Planning & Schedules were moved from Head Office to the District Offices. I had to get cash from the accounts department to cover the service registration fees. I would set off to Cambridge between 0920 & 0945 in a Vauxhall Nova car that was otherwise used by the mobile inspectors. I had to deposit the registrations and then see that they were published in N&P (Notices & Proceedings), having entered them in a ledger and kept a file copy in a binder. I used to say a 3-hour turn round to Cambridge and return. I should mention that after the initial submission of all registrations for the local services that we planned to operate from October 1986, no changes were permitted to those before March 1987.

On the split up of Eastern National after the sale to Badgerline, I went to Basildon as Traffic Officer from July 1990 when the southern part of EN was hived off as Thamesway. Life was different and I had to commute from home in Chelmsford. I was then made redundant in August 1992".

Additional notes:

Geoff Dodson adds:

"I was sad to read of the passing of Anthony Spindler. It brought to mind my time at Eastern National as a 16-year-old when I joined from school in Ipswich in September 1950. I was appointed to the Traffic Office, under Anthony's father Fred Spindler who was Publicity Superintendent. I worked alongside Donald MacGregor (later of Heddingham fame). Fred gave Donald and I a good grounding in publicity matters and timetabling.

"But as an aside, something I will never forget, when checking timetable proofs, a route in the Midland area covered the village of Pidley (near Huntingdon / St Ives) where the timing point was the Mad Cat pub - the "Pidley Mad Cat" - which amused me as a 16-year-old, but this was not shared by Donald MacGregor when it was being read out! He would admonish me for my hilarity every time! (The pub still exists.)

"The notes of Anthony's talk (above) filled in some of the details of Fred's life for me, particularly the period NOTC to ENOC. "I left Eastern National in 1951 but returned in October 1978 from National Travel South East. I was later acquainted with Anthony although our paths were different. I was only involved as Coaching Manager, then from 1980 Manager, Braintree, Uttlesford & East Herts; 1986 member of the Management Buy Out team; 1987 Manager Contracts & Commercial Activities; 1990 Marketing Manager until early retirement in 1996."

Anthony's time administering accidents, reminded Geoff of his time at NTSE and their own Accident Reports. Geoff adds:

"To most people the legal profession looks pretty boring, but it did have its lighter side as the company Wedlake Saint found. For example:

'I collided with a stationary coach which was coming in the other direction'

'To avoid a collision, I ran into the coach'

'I had been driving for 40 years when I fell asleep at the wheel and had an accident'

'The coach was all over the road. I had to swerve a number of times before I hit him'."

Finally, attached are Anthony's original hand-written notes, in case of interest. They are reflected in the text above.

Talk at Wickford or Rochford on my experiences in the Bus Industry.

Brief note about my Father. He was born at Canterbury one caring to get on the Southern Railway. He was for a medical got turned down with murmur of the heart. After a time in an Auctioneer office ^{but then} ^{eventually got onto Bus} side and he joined the National Omnibus at Brompton Road (over Brompton Rd Underground station) (but then Underground etc closed in 1934.) He came to Chelmsford when EASTERN, SOUTHERN, WESTERN NATIONAL came into existence. It was Chelmsford in May 1932 with F. Bogan and my father was his assistant. He spent much time on RSL in connection with the 1930 RTA then in the Wartime Workmen Schedules then the publicity section until his death in May 1969. During that time he was made TA(P). Although he was much against me joining (therefore ^{to} he in close contact with him) he ^{help to Sunderland} ~~did not~~ and I started on 5 October 1964, in the Road Service Licensing department with the Forge Bob Beaumont and Peter Stobart. I stayed in that section to Easter 1965 when I moved to Bus Station. Duke Street under the then Arthur Allan Chief Inspector Central. I did late & early reports ^{and absences} went with Arthur out looking at New Estates being built for houses to traverse there. Generally learnt the practical working of a depot ^{and Inspector} ^{I was} also under Keith Brown who was 24, and came from Knaphill, High Wycombe. I was ~~hunted~~ ^{hunted} back to Head Office on the 9th March 1966 and had time in Extended Coach Tow Department for Summer 1966 ^{Season} under Mr Morley. Mr Fenton and Ced Harris then Ketley and Susan (Mr Morley's Secretary) ^{were} ^{there}. I dealt with Drivers Instructions, Luggage labels etc and then on 19 September 1966 to RSL Department in Peter Stobart's position. I stayed here until July 1990 when my wife which was made in Sept 1974 as TALK then became Traffic Assistant because I took on a host of jobs. I carried on with RSL work through that time (with David Whitehead and Bob Beaumont ^{who} returned in April 1973 when his Forge retired and Bob took up L. Officer until much later becoming Planning Officer. I took on in mid 1973 the Traffic side of Accident Reports from Tom Taylor in the General Section who had been an Driver and Inspector. Then in 1983 Accident Reports involving both Secretary/Traffic and the Insurance Company from a man in Secretarial dept who was made Redundant because of his incompetence. I did that work until I could not cope with

all the work and that passed to Engineer's Assistant. I would receive the reports from the depots put on Accident NO send them all to SMT at ⁱⁿ Norwich for them to deal with. I would enter them in a ledger and keep a copy of the Accident. SMT would send notification that they wanted the Cost of the Accident - I would send them to Engineer of that depot and he would send back the information i.e Parts, Cost and I would add on £55 a day for loss of use if the Accident was a serious one. SMT would also send me queries to sort out which went the same way to Engineer or Traffic for that depot, and then send them to Norwich in reply. Then I also took up Stationery once a week (in a room in the driver School yard) Tickets to Agents/other Safe Driving Awards, and Tickets to Agents from the Secretarial Dept where a man in the Post Room ^{who did} ~~would~~ do it and who they dealt with. This in sections I dealt with in between doing RSL work. So it was a hard life.

I continued in RSL department until the 1985 Transport Act and dealt with Coach Registrations, Highwayman and Express Coach Services Stage would be Schedules and then into RSL Dept to take to Cambridge. I was responsible to take them to Cambridge after getting Cash from the Accounts department and then setting out to Cambridge between 0920 & 0945 in a Vauxhall Nova Car for me by Mobile Inspectors who were not using the Car at that time take them to Cambridge deposited them and see them published in NHP having entered in a ledger and kept a copy in a binder ^{together with a file copy.} to check publication. I used to say a 3 hour turn round to Cambridge & Rm. Also should mention that no new registrations to be made until March 1987 from October 1986.

I knew FRB. Well from October 1964. (see 606/607 EBN letters) and was with him, most of the time to 1990, 1985 he went ^{He went to HD BE depots in the 1960's} to Clacton from Gosfield as PSO and then joined Hedderham and went to Suffolk County Council but I still kept up with him, until the last 6-9 months. When he was living in the Ipswich area went to Hadleigh. He sent me leaflets from Hadleigh in his last month, but I never could do the trip.