

Yet More MacBrayne's Memories

More stories from Alan M Watkins

A funny aside about MacBrayne

Parcel Traffic was for many years an important source of revenue for MacBrayne. Some of this was pre-booked or on a Contract with Glasgow but quite a lot of it was "on the road" and for dealing with this you were issued with books of tickets of various values with gummed rears which you had to stick on the parcel. You had massive books of Parcel Labels, Newspaper Labels and Milk Labels. Known on the road in my time simply as "stickies".

In the Office it was quite simple. You put the object on the scale, weighed it, and put the "stickie" to the relevant value on.

Of course, being MacBrayne even in the Office it was not as simple as all that.

Glasgow-Campbeltown, Ardrishaig-Oban, Rest and Be Thankful-Arrochar had a flat rate dependent entirely on the weight of the parcel, not the distance it was going. Just the weight.

For the rest of the Empire, or North of Ballachulish, it was based on a combination of both weight and mileage.

Offices did their calculations. On the road was different.

The Official Instruction was that if a parcel was being sent to somewhere where there was no Official Agent it had to be prepaid in advance. If it was going to somewhere where there WAS an official agent it could go to be paid on arrival (and put your sticker on when they paid and you collected the money).

There were roadside problems with this in my time. It broke down in several practical ways. One was you would be handed a "parcel" or package to be delivered down the road to Mrs MacArdle "who will be waiting for you at Abriachan" but who was not an Approved Agent. The Consignee certainly offered no money.

I used to take the package on board in the hope that Mrs MacArdle would be waiting at Abriachan and that she would pay at the other end.

Even that could be a problem. Assuming Mrs MacArdle was waiting at the other end what should she pay?

I do not know because the Road Staff did not have any Scales and we played guess your weight on a daily basis. Was it over 7lbs but under 14lbs? Or nudging 21lbs but under 28lbs. Without a scale who can say?

So, often, an Ad Hoc Local Agreement took place and I duly issued my "stickie" and all went away contented.

Not helpful I know but if a parcel was consigned to an Official Agent, prepaid or not, and the Official Agent was not present to receive same "such traffic will be left at most convenient point" (Like outside a Village Shop Door on Early Closing Day).

A few snippets from not far short of a Century ago

From the 1931 Instructions to Drivers and Conductors of the then fairly embryonic bus services of David MacBrayne (1928) Ltd a few snippets may be of interest in no particular order:

"Staff must at all times ensure that their uniform is clean and worn in Good Order and will be held responsible for the personal cleansing of same. Any uniform equipment in need of replacement must be notified without delay and no adjustments to such equipment must be undertaken without Official Approval. The full Official Uniform must be worn at all times when on Duty.

"It is the Duty of all Members of Staff to provide a Polite and Courteous Service to all Members of the Public and to provide, to the fullest extent, such Information and Assistance as they may require before, during or after the Journey undertaken.

"If a Vehicle is Instructed to travel to a destination not available to be displayed by the Destination Indicator fitted to the Vehicle it must be turned to the blank space provided and the Conductor (or Driver if no Conductor is carried on the Vehicle) will be wholly responsible for advising intending Passengers of the Destination of the Vehicle at each place it may Halt.

"Conductors on all Journeys (or Drivers where no Conductor is carried) must ensure that they are equipped with Tickets of All Denominations in sufficient quantity for them to complete the Duty to which they have been Assigned. Failure to do so will result in a stoppage of Pay for One Day and/or such further action as may be determined by Higher Authority

"Where a Driver or Conductor is Instructed by a Higher Authority to perform a Journey not contained in the Route Duty which they are working they must carry out this Instruction without Complaint and to a Satisfactory Conclusion.

"No Member of the Road Staff shall enter Licensed Premises while On Duty or Paid Time of The Company without Just Cause for so doing. Any Transgression of this Rule will lead to Instant Dismissal of The Employee (s) by the Company (Without Reference).

"Under NO CIRCUMSTANCES WHATSOEVER should a Vehicle of David MacBrayne (1928) Ltd be left with the engine running while unattended. Any breach of this Rule will result in a Severe Sanction to be determined.

"Drivers will be responsible for the Good Running of their Vehicle and must report at their Earliest Opportunity any Faults of which they become aware, using the Official Form provided for same.

And finally: my own Personal Favourite:

"Ladies travelling on Any Service, particularly those Travelling Unaccompanied, must be afforded the Closest Personal Attention of Drivers and Conductors at all times."

The capped up bits are as per the book. Nearly a century ago now.....

We did all sorts of things in those days

Looking back on over 50 years ago with MacBrayne you realise how much it has all changed - not necessarily for the worst or better (sometimes both perhaps but changed in any event)

from today although there can probably be no dispute that the buses are a considerable scientific technological advance. Personally I suspect driving one in really terrible snow/ice is probably not a lot different except that I always found a manual box a massive aid in this but I digress.

On some routes you were hailed by someone who had no interest in getting on but handed you a letter which you placed in the "on board" post box.

Occasionally there was a "Call the Midwife" moment or, more accurately, a "Call the District Nurse" in full uniform rig (with or without bicycle) who would flag you down and hand you a prescription to be handed in to the Chemist and returned to her on the "up" or next available up or returning bus which she would meet at the roadside. Sometimes she could not do this - in which case she would indicate the croft, cottage, house on which you should bang on the door to hand it over having gone to the Chemist in the first place without being asked for an authority for handing the prescription over or collecting it.

Or sometimes someone just wanted their Road Tax renewed, handed you all the documents and the money, and left you to do that at the Post Office and hand it back to them on the way back (very common in Argyllshire).

On some routes you doubled as the school bus which sometimes involved helping the smallest on and then helping them off when you got there.

And then sometimes seeing them safely across the road to their little school.

Holding hands with little boys and girls - "Let's all hold hands. Look right, look left, look right again, yes it's safe to go." Such was the power of an Official Uniform. I carted them across the road - and once organised an impromptu roadside stop for a little girl who who came up to the Conductor put her hand up and told me "Please I need to go to the lavy" - all of this miraculously achieved without being investigated by the Criminal Records Bureau as to my fitness to do this or whether I might possibly have an ulterior motive.

It must be said I had an interest in her not going to the "lavy" on the bus. The MacBrayne rules of the time on a crew job was that the driver washed it down and refuelled it and the conductor swept it out including anyone going to the "lavy" or, worse.

Delivering crates of quarter-pint milk to numerous primary schools in time for their mid-morning milk break. As was.

Watching a mother, with child in arms, desperately trying to collapse down a push chair of that time and getting off to see if you could do it for her and then finding a home for it on the bus.

Seeing an Old Person really struggling with two heavy bags and getting off to carry them for him or her (it would be the other way round these days).

What did I get out of this? Well, I thought MacBrayne was important at the time and felt I was an important part of the Community and was strangely proud to be part of it as an interloping Sassenach and really thought it meant something.

On the practical side of it I got a full on kiss one Christmas Eve from the postmistress at Barbreck who I suspect had imbibed a wee dram too many, several pairs of hand knitted socks, a home-made cake "for you and the driver" but, best of all, a lifelong love of the area I was serving.

On the road without a mobile phone

In the ancient days of my youth there were no mobile phones for the MacBrayne road staff or anyone else in an operating area where, sometimes, it might be 10 or more miles before a Red Phone Box hove into sight.

MacBrayne relied heavily on them to make contact with drivers/conductors if an "urgent" situation arose. Their normal method for stage buses was to consult the timetable and then phone ahead to the nearest post office/village shop (or other establishment, see under local knowledge) and ask them to stop the bus and convey a message to ring wherever it was. Many of the little post offices/village shops had a phone box either outside or very close by (as the sort of village centre) and of course most had their own private telephone, although not all. There were wee shops who also used the red phone box themselves unbelievable though that may be today.

It didn't happen a great deal in my time but when it did happen, the scenario was like this. One I remember was the morning bus from Ardrishaig to Oban where we pulled up outside and the shopkeeper was waiting. "Ring Glasgow urgently please."

Into Red Phone Box with Press Button A, Press Button B (to get your money back). Instead dialled 0. Operator: "What number do you require please."

Me: "Transfer charge call to Glasgow Central 9231 please."

Operator: "Your name please and what number are you calling from."

Me: Alan Watkins calling from whatever it said in the phone box or on the phone.

Operator: Hold on please. Brrr. brrr....brrr...brrr whatever

MacBraynes

Operator: Mr Watkins is calling you from (whatever it was). Will you play for the call?

MacBraynes: Yes

Operator: Go ahead caller.

Watkins to MacBrayne switchboard: Road Traffic Department please.

On that occasion it was to ask the bus to watch out for someone just as we came into Oban standing by the roadside with a parcel, to take it on board without charge and deliver it personally to a steamer Purser in Oban "who will be waiting for you. We've told him." It was marked "Medical Supplies, Urgent" and was for one of the Islands. No idea what it contained.

If you had a vehicle breakdown miles from anywhere it was a different matter. Basically you had two options - to walk to a phone box/shop/house if you knew the road or wait until another vehicle turned up and try and hitch a lift for help.

Fortunately I was never in that situation but MacBrayne had local back-ups for this in my time. The closest I came was when a bus started making dreadful noises from the engine but I was only about four miles out of Glasgow and "nursed" it home at 15 miles an hour - I'm no good on mechanics and cannot remember if it was a head gasket or a cylinder head or a timing chain but whatever it was it was about to be life expired.

There were no displays on the bus instruments of that time just as Red Phone Boxes did not know much about apps.

If a bus went "missing" without explanation someone was sent out as a search party, either with a bus (mostly) or by car and Control would ring people along the route to see who had last seen it. It at least gave them an idea as to where it might be.

Today I see people of all ages grappling with their mobiles: "Sorry I lost you there. Let me go into the garden...that's better. What was it you said?"

"Lost you there, I'll try and call you back. Bloody phone. God, the reception is dreadful here."

Operator: "What number do you require?"

"Transfer charge call please to Glasgow Central 9231 (or Ardrishaig 205 or wherever).

Coping with the peak traffic

In Alan Nightingale's brilliant book *O'er Highland Highways* there are some very fine pictures of "convoys" of coaches on Glasgow-Argyllshire route and many of the older members of this group will remember these well at peak times which were broadly July and August and run up to Christmas and Hogmanay. Many other members of this group will have pictures of duplicates to a service bus on the "main line" roads which, of course, also included Glasgow-Fort William-Inverness and the connectional link from Glasgow-Ardrishaig-Oban.

These convoys were common from Glasgow as soon as MacBrayne opened their route in competition with Link Lines (who also did convoys) but for younger persons today I thought it might be worth recording how it was organised in my time.

They tried as hard as they could to get some idea of traffic levels. From vast experience they knew what the peak weeks were - Glasgow wakes weeks, schools going out for the summer etc etc. The whole idea was to take as many precautions as they reasonably could to have enough vehicles available - I'm looking at some of my Edmondson card (of which I have probably more than is healthy) and, for example, I've got an Edmondson issued by Glasgow for Armadale to Portree ("To be exchanged for ticket on bus) because of course in July/August there could be very heavy traffic on the steamers as you know and that was just another attempt to give some idea to Skye as to what the vehicle allocation might be and not to be caught out.

In Glasgow and elsewhere there were standby vehicles for the Saturdays (another reason MacBrayne did not run Excursions on a Saturday). It is best described I think as to try and create the "knowns" as much as possible because there was nothing they could do about the "walk-ons" except to cope with them when they turned up.

Duplicate coaches full with pre-books to one destination were operated by the driver and worked direct. Maybrayne's had a bevy of "backing" or "duplicate" licences which enabled vehicles to operate non-stop if necessary - Glasgow-Campbeltown, Ardrishaig (Ardrishaig to Oban), Glasgow-Tarbert, Glasgow-Inverary, Glasgow-Minard (for the Holiday Fellowship Hotel trips which were all pre booked Edmondson tickets although if they could be accommodated on the service/duplicates they did not get their own coach).

I am probably telling Grandmother how to suck eggs here but the way it was organised when I first joined at Glasgow was this. Let us take the main run to Campbeltown at 3.15 p.m. The lead bus went all the way to Campbeltown and the drivers/conductors/Inspectors would pile anyone going beyond Ardrishaig on to that vehicle. Depending on the traffic on offer the duplicates would say, show Ardrishaig (one or more), if it was really heavy there might be an additional one showing Tarbert and another showing Inverary. and they tried to load to meet those destination blinds.

It was one of the reasons why MacBrayne rarely used DUPLICATE which was on the blinds as it was frowned upon on the long distance services because it obviously did not help loading and the "system". Sometimes if the buses going to Ardrishaig filled up the Inverary or Tarbert relief would be altered to go to Ardrishaig to cope with any intermediate roadside traffic. It was more or less made up on the spot. If there were too many going beyond Ardrishaig for the lead bus one of the duplicates had to deal with that and go beyond Ardrishaig (to Campbeltown if necessary or "last passenger" if lucky).

You had to sign on at 1.30 p.m in the Summer peak (Christmas/Hogmanay). for this duty simply to play a part in "organising" the passengers on to the "correct" vehicle. MacBrayne rapidly ran out of conductors and so you were often covering two or three vehicles and you had to cover these before anything left. If you were doing "multi conducting" it was advisable to have two ticket racks (plus your spares in the machine box). It was entirely possible for a multi-conducting conductor to have the best part of £200 in his/her bag which was rather a lot of money for the time. Inspectors would also help out by taking fares and sometimes Robertson Street sent clerks who could do this as well.

Those fully loaded for one destination only went without a conductor. (Did the normal wee stop of course). Those allocated to pick up anyone on the road had to have a conductor (at least on half cabs) although I have a funny story about this. I was conducting one of these convoys once (I cannot remember whereto but not Campbeltown) and I picked up a passenger just outside the City (which was fairly unusual) who clambered on and said: "Return to Campbeltown" which I issued and transferred him successfully at the wee stop.

This was the Summer scheduling. Ardrishaig did the 3.15 in the winter so far as I remember but Ardrishaig had considerable commitments of their own (Oban, duplicates as far as Inverness sometimes) in the Summer and the 3.15 in Summer was predominantly a Glasgow commitment although vehicles theoretically based at Fort William might be found straying into Argyll as a duplicate.

In my time on Friday nights two vehicles had to go through to Campbeltown in the Summer regardless of how many passengers because for a long time MacBrayne, as you probably remember, had a 7 a.m. SO Limited Stop to Glasgow which was an official duplicate in the timetable to the normal service bus. In my time you lodged with Mrs MacDonald, a lovely lady, who insisted on referring to MacBrayne crews as "my wee boys" (regardless of our physical stature) and who usually had something on the go cooking for around 9.15 p.m. She was a treasure. Breakfast as well. At night a proper thick home made Scotch Broth to die for.....Baxters current version eat your heart out.

MacBrayne in their timetable encouraged pre books on the Glasgow-Fort William-Inverness routes and used both Edmondson cards and very long Insert Setrights which were office issued and required date and time of travel so they could better anticipate the traffic and subsequent vehicle allocation.

Sometimes of course MacBrayne simply ran out of vehicles and staff for the numbers involved on the main line routes particularly after they started doing holidays which had a high number of Saturday departures and a high number of Saturday conclusions in the form of steamer "collects" for back to Glasgow at the end of the holiday.

In my time then they had to "hire in" to cope with this. They were fussy about who they used for this - the front runners were Baxters, Lawson and Barton Transport who worked into Glasgow often with duplicates from Nottinghamshire/ Derbyshire on a busy seasonal express and was good money for Barton and their drivers. Barton drivers were sent as passengers into Argyllshire to learn the route.

MacBrayne had odd local "peaks" to cover as well. Fort William-Corpach was the most obvious, at times requiring six vehicles on the road (schools/factory), some cinemas out of Inverness on Saturday nights to part of the way to Corriemoney/Foyers - Friday night train at Arrochar (August mostly) when the 7 p.m. on the Carrick Castle route sometimes needed a second bus which usually fell to the school contract driver to Inverary.

All these worked as far as last passenger in my time.

Skye had many summer duplicates thanks to the Edmondson card pre bookings via office and steamer.

For the avoidance of all doubt this was a very long time ago and before absolutely everyone had a car.

Lassie in Distress - a MacBrayne memory

Very early on in my conducting days I was parachuted in (via a Friday duplicate from Glasgow) to Fort William and found myself on the 9.35 Fort William-Inverness mercifully with a Fort William driver because I didn't have a clue as to where I was. I think it was a Reliance.

Whatever it was somewhere slightly short of what I later recognised as Fort Augustus (I think) we met the "joint" Highland coming the other way parked up and with the lassie conducting flagging us down with both hands on our side of the road. So naturally we stopped. What disasters lay ahead?

She clambered aboard and said: "I'm in terrible trouble. I left without checking the ticket box and I've no ten-shilling overprints and I've used most of my returns to make the fares up and I've not enough to get back. Can I have some of yours."

Then Young Person had assiduously read the "Instructions for Drivers and Conductors" that Mr MacBrayne helpfully provided for the road staff but I don't recall this situation being covered.

"Don't you have an emergency book? (I told you I had read the rules about Insert Setright machines jamming).

"No" she said helplessly. "I've only just started. I'm a spare - I was supposed to be on the Thurso road and town in the afternoon but they put me on this. I don't even know where I am but my driver said we would meet the MacBrayne bus". I would like to be able to tell you that I told her that I didn't know where I was either.....but I didn't.

Lassie in Distress at the roadside. What to do? Well, it was a Joint Service. Young Person took what is probably now regarded as an executive decision but being totally unsure himself attempted to cover his own behind at the same time. Handed over a pack of MacBrayne ten-shilling overprints and a pack of MacBrayne standard returns but heartlessly logged the starting numbers of both on the back of the Waybill and made her sign it with her name and conductor badge number.

Paid in with an accompanying note to explain my missing ticket "packs" and fully expected to be asked about this. Never was. Saw her a few weeks later on the back of a decker in Inverness so both of us survived.

Long time ago when she and I were both young. And didn't know what we were doing.

MacBrayne To the Rescue

It was a Sunday shortly after Christmas and Old Person was then a lot Younger and was driving the late Mailbus one winter Sunday afternoon. This was a doddle of a shift in the Winter in terms of work load. You signed on at 2.30 p.m. and drove the 3 p.m. from Fort William to Tyndrum, a trip through spectacular scenery (particularly in Glencoe) when your vehicle was like a tiny ant compared to the mountains that soared to the side of the road. My steed that day was the Fort William half-cab AEC III which was the regular performer on the Fort William share of the route.

We left, as was usual in Winter, with absolutely no one for Tyndrum but with a few passengers mostly between the Fort and Kinlochleven. Between Kinlochleven and Tyndrum we had no one - and my Conductress sat herself down and got on with her knitting - but passengers were not the main purpose of the route - this was a Mail Contract and the boot was full of mailbags to be handed over at Tyndrum to rail and post office staff and this route was heavily subsidised by the Post Office contract. Only in July and August were there regular passengers as far as Tyndrum - occasionally in Winter but rare.

The journey down was uneventful, a gentle stroll on a freezing afternoon and a strengthening wind and virtually no traffic about at all. I can't remember where, at this distance, but somewhere short of Tyndrum (possibly Bridge of Orchy or thereabouts) it began to snow, fairly gentle at first but by the time we pulled into Tyndrum it was chucking it down and settling.

As usual two vehicles greeted us. One was the Post Office van and the other was Alexanders bus going to Glasgow. MacBrayne and Alexander had through ticketing arrangements on these Tyndrum journeys but, again, they rarely had through passengers in winter time. We arrived at Tyndrum at around 5.40 p.m.

Mailbags successfully transferred for some distant places to the van, the remainder taken to the station to be placed in the care (then) of British Railways (Scottish Region).

Conductress (bringing her knitting with her) and I repaired to the local Hotel, long the layover haunt of MacBrayne and Alexander crews where there was wonderful hospitality, a roaring fire, tea and coffee and "pieces", better known as sandwiches in some parts of the world, should you require them. The Alexander driver and his "lassie" were just about to leave and we confirmed that we had absolutely no one for them.

We were due back out to Fort William at 7.30 p.m. but it did not work out like that. It was not, so far as I remember, due to the weather but to a train failure because one of the Station Staff also repaired to the hotel (and had something slightly stronger than tea or coffee as I remember) to inform us that the "mail" train was going to be at least an hour and something late. My conductress did her MacBrayne duty and made a transfer charge call from the Hotel kiosk to Glasgow Central 9231 to inform "Road Transport Control" of this. We sat and waited and the substitute train rolled in around 9 p.m. One more call to tell Glasgow.

Mailbags successfully transferred to boot we set off for Fort William. The snow was about two or three inches deep (it had stopped snowing) blown into heaps here and there by the wind which is absolutely no problem to drive on unless you have to stop suddenly. No one was inconvenienced by this lengthy delay because, apart from the mailbags, there were not any passengers.

Although very late Young Person roughly maintained the 20-mph average of this service - waved to a MacBrayne lorry coming the other way - but had absolutely no chance of "making up time". I presume but do not know that my Conductress carried on knitting. (I remain in awe of people who can carry on perfectly normal conversations while knitting one, dropping one and purling one but I digress). Somewhere around Glencoe X Roads we encountered the usual "mountain blizzard" but mercifully no other traffic. Very heavy driving snow but not in the category of requiring the MacBrayne snow chains sharing the boot with the mailbags.

Somewhere on the very lonely road between the Cross Roads and Kinlochleven the AEC headlights picked out the arse end of a car (a Triumph Herald, anyone remember those?) sticking out halfway across my side of the road. I adjusted my position to negotiate this successfully and as I did so my Conductress, the lovely Aileen fae Inverlochy, hammered on my back window with her ticket rack in a Scottish version of "six bells". I came to a gentle halt somewhere down the road.

Aileen came round and said: "There's people inside." So, in our MacBrayne greatcoats, we walked back together. There was an elderly couple. We asked if they were all right but they weren't. For whatever reason they had lost the road and were marooned in the middle of nowhere in atrocious conditions very late at night and while uninjured were shocked and upset and had little future spending the night where they were.

So we helped them out and took them to Fort William where we arrived at gone Midnight and where Aileen took them home to Inverlochy while I parked and filled up the AEC.

Her Dad was a Stationmaster on the Mallaig line. As a Young Person I would have had very serious "intentions" towards Aileen (as was said in those times) had she not already been "spoken for" (as was also said in those times) by a braw lad from Corpach who went on to be a very distinguished vet in Glasgow.

All gone and hardly a Dickens Christmas Story anyway but there we are.

Control Room/Traffic Department

The one bus company Control Room/Traffic Department that would have challenged even British Rail in the then complexity was MacBrayne in which I spent my final six months. I have posted some to the MacBrayne Circle and will not repeat it again. It was a 24/7 operation and on the overnight shift 10 p.m to 6 a.m. we were left dealing with buses, lorries, steamers and the Scottish Region of British Railways (to whose Control Room there was a direct line to and fro).

It was interesting and multifarious - the Steamer skipper on a dreadful early radio telephone telling you that they would be around two hours late into Lochmaddy and could we let them know? Of course we could - at least one lorry and two buses needed to know that as they waited for departures in the early hours of the morning. No STD in those days. Dial 0 to get the operator. "What number do you require please"? "Lochmaddy 337 please". Eventually the Brr...Brrr.. of the time and a voice: "MacBrayne"

"Hello, Glasgow Control here, just to tell you that the steamer is at least two hours adrift from you."

"Not surprised - rough night here. Thanks, Laddie."

Or Scottish Region ringing to tell you of an "engine failure" which means the train into Kyle is going to be "at least an hour late - we've another loco on the way" You could usually add an hour or so to that prediction.

Or the MacBrayne haulage driver who rang one night, with 50 sheep on board, to announce he had picked up a puncture absolutely in the middle of nowhere and had walked nearly a mile before finding a house with lights on and a telephoneyou sort of learned to fear incoming calls from The Operator: "Mr Whoever It Is is calling you from Wherever It Is and is asking you to accept the charge." "Yes, that's fine.....we accept the charge." "Go ahead, caller"

You KNEW that was going to be a problem. But operations had to solve them

Time to grab your copy of the David MacBrayne Staff List and Approved Contractors "Strictly Private for Staff Use Only" which helpfully contained all the out of hours numbers and attempt to rescue 50 sheep in the middle of nowhere.

Look at the clock - take a deep breath. Ask the operator for Arrochar 243 - phone rings out and eventually answered. "Sorry to call you so late - we've a failed vehicle with around 50 sheep on board".

"Nae problem. Where is it?"

"Just coming out of Inveraray. To the Cattle Market."

Give him the MacBrayne "reference number" having grabbed also my invoice copy of "Hiring of Contractors in Emergency Situations" with two carbon sheets. Bit of form filling to follow. Tell him to pick up our driver as well. Ring the Goods Station in Parliamentary Road but it just rang out. Ring driver and tell him to help and he'll get a lift as well.

Wake up Glasgow haulage traffic manager who was absolutely delighted to be told that Control had taken his sheep off and got his driver home but he still had a punctured vehicle to deal with if/when he got back to sleep and got up.

Operations, operations. And no mobile phones or apps or anything. It was a wonder we survived really.