

Ticketing tales - Theobalds of Long Melford

Another story from Alan M Watkins

Can I burden everyone with a Theobalds "anecdote" as I gave them a moment of "fame"?

I knew "Tubby" Theobald very well - he was a great local character. His son took over the business but died in his 50s instantaneously from a heart attack, a literal "dropped down dead."

From the start Theobalds used Bell Punch tickets until deciding to go over to Insert Setrights. I acquired via Tubby and still have all of Theobalds punch tickets that were dumped in the loft, some going back to the 1920s. (I won't bore everyone as to how you date Bell Punch tickets). I released some to the then Ticket and Fare Collection Society (now the Transport Ticket Society) and they distributed sets to their members.

Many years ago the Imperial War Musuem mounted an exhibition called "The Home Front" which featured the home "effort" during World War II - "Dig for Victory" and all that. The propaganda, slogan stuff.

Somehow they came to me to ask if I could stage a transport contribution.

So I made up a set of Theobald's wartime punch tickets showing the fare prices in one set and the slogans in another set on the back. The slogans include a large V for Victory, Beat the Paperhanger, be a Paper Saver (Hitler had been a painter, apparently), Careless Talk Costs Lives and several others using the reverse of Theobalds tickets.

They had a complete set of Theobalds in a triple tier rack together with a Bell Punch machine - the latter not Theobalds as they hired theirs from BP rather than buying them outright.

According to the Imperial War Museum it was "one of the exhibits which attracted the most interest" although probably they said that to everyone! Collected by Securicor, delivered back by Securicor.

So a little slice of history for Theobalds in deepest Suffolk. Tubby was wonderful, his son somewhat more moody.