

Old Premier Travel drivers never retire

Another short story from Alan M Watkins

Charlie Jaggard was a great servant of PT all his working life at Haverhill, joining with the takeover of Burgoin in the 50's. He was a top link driver for many years and much loved by all - fellow staff and customers. He kept driving into his 70's on a part time basis but unfortunately his eyesight began to go and then his hearing and he would not have passed his medical for his badge.

Charlie was heartbroken about this and tried to stay away all together but couldn't and was back at the depot every day. Roly Scrivener who was head driver and de-facto Manager at Haverhill (also a smashing bloke) used to try and find him little jobs to do. Arthur Lainson and "Mother" got to hear of this and made the job OFFICIAL - part time, general helper, messenger (obviously couldn't drive anything) but taking a parcel down the Post Office etc and Charlie was in his element. I don't suppose the money was a lot but it was a lovely gesture and it gave him a purpose again which he'd lost when forced into retirement. Charlie continued doing this little job into his 80's and, then ironically, was killed by one of the company vehicles.

A saloon was reversing in the yard and Charlie, who was pretty much stone deaf by then, backed into it as he turned to walk somewhere else. It caught his shoulder and threw him to the ground where he hit his head on the concrete and never regained consciousness dying about a week later in West Suffolk Hospital. Everybody in the company was devastated by this, not least the unfortunate driver who was in no way to blame. There was a massive turn out (retired and current staff), all the Directors at his funeral. Very sad end to a long career - marvellous bloke to work with and probably one of the best ambassadors they ever had.

The only thing you can say about it is that it was quick and his little job made his old age very happy. His wife Elsie said the little Camps Road job had given his life meaning again – but PT was like that. When Harry Wynn (the Huntingdon depot manager) had to give up working outside as his asthma became more and more troublesome he was found a job in the wages department and although he missed being involved on the traffic side it enabled him to work on for many more years. I suspect that without his little job Charlie would have "given up the ghost". It had been so much a part of his life that he just couldn't stay away. Premier was like that for so many people - aside from the casual conductors most of the permanent staff had been there many, many years.