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The story of PUBLIC TRANSPORT in GREATER MANCHESTER



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Manchester occupies a special place in the history of transport in the world.

Britain was the first country to become an industrial society. Manchester was at the very centre of the world's first industrial revolution. It was the world's first industrial city. In particular it became 'Cottonopolis', the world centre for the manufacture and selling of cotton goods. Trade demanded an efficient transport system and Manchester was at the heart of a number of the most significant transport innovations in human history.

These included the building of the **Bridgewater Canal** - this canal is widely acknowledged to have been the first modern canal of the industrial age.

Manchester was also at the heart of the railway revolution. The opening in 1830 of the **Liverpool and Manchester Railway** heralded a transport revolution that redefined society. The Manchester terminus of this pioneer railway line, the first intercity passenger railway in the world, survives (now the main attraction in the Manchester Museum of Science and Industry).

An efficient system of transport was also essential to ensure the continuing growth of the city and region in the nineteenth century. In 1894 the city became an inland port with the opening of the **Manchester Ship Canal** - this audacious project boosted not just the city but the region's economy. The canal was an engineering feat comparable to the building of the Suez Canal. It was also a project in which the City Council played a crucial role.

Manchester also developed a sophisticated system of passenger transport beginning with a regular passenger service using horse-drawn omnibuses in the 1820s. The development of the suburbs and the smooth operation of the urban economy came to depend on an extensive and efficient network of 'bus routes. By the early twentieth century the municipal authorities had control of this urban transport system. They continued to develop it, especially the **Manchester Trams**; a network of electric trams was built which connected the different districts of Manchester. Manchester and Salford also extended the tramways to connect the city to the neighbouring towns of 'Textile Lancashire'.

One of the defining transport innovations in the twentieth century was the aeroplane. Manchester was at the forefront of this next transport revolution. It was a centre for the manufacture of some of the earliest aeroplanes in this country. The City Council also saw it as part of its municipal responsibilities to promote civil aviation.

Barton Aerodrome was the first major municipally owned and controlled airport in the country (maybe the world?). The airport was later moved to Ringway, later becoming Manchester International Airport.

The decline of traditional industries meant that the Manchester region faced different problems after the Second World War. One problem was how to modernise the transport infrastructure. The search for an integrated passenger transport resulted in the revival of urban tramways in the late twentieth century. Manchester became one of the first cities in Britain to open a modern 'tramway' system.

The opening in 1992 of the **Metrolink** confirmed Manchester's innovative role in transport, a recognition that the city and the region was a dynamic which could neither function or develop without a sophisticated transport system to move its people and to carry out its business.

The website, **No Anorak Required** sets out to take the user on this incredible journey, a journey of invention and innovation that took place over the last 300 years. The user can stop off at any point and find out more about these transport developments that transformed a small market town into the centre of one of the world's greatest industrial regions.

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Canals

Canals were not a new form of transport in the eighteenth century. Their history can be traced back to Roman times. However it was in the eighteenth century that the modern canal revolution began. Manchester was at the epicentre of this revolution. Improvements had already been made to town's main river, the Irwell, in the early eighteenth century but it was the arrival of the **Bridgewater Canal** that marked the beginning of a new age in transport.

The world's first modern industrial canal was built to connect Worsley to Manchester. The Bridgewater Canal was built and financed entirely by Francis Egerton, the Third Duke of Bridgewater. Its purpose was to provide a more efficient (cheaper) way of carrying coal from the Duke of Bridgewater's collieries at Worsley to the coal-hungry market of Manchester. The engineering problems were considerable and the decision to carry the canal over the river Irwell resulted in the building of the **Barton Aqueduct**. This was one of the greatest industrial monuments of the industrial revolution.

The Manchester terminus of the canal was at **Castlefield**.

This had been the site of the Roman settlement of Mamucium. The canal basin was essentially a coal depot until the extension of the canal to Runcorn in 1776 when barges arrived carrying foodstuffs, cotton, chemicals, timber and other raw materials that were essential for the growth of the town. The building of warehouses and wharves followed. Potato Wharf still exists. The Oxnoble, one of the district's oldest public houses was named after a popular variety of potato.

Castlefield soon became one of the sights of modern Manchester. The town's first guidebook, published in 1784, began at Castlefield. It described with pride the activity in the basin. It was a place where the modern world could be viewed.

But as well as carrying the food essential for the survival of any urban population, the canal also carried passengers. A regular service of fly boats was organised to carry people between Manchester and Runcorn. These boats were pulled by special horses and had priority over other canal traffic. There was a timetable and the fares charged depended on where in the barge one sat. Refreshments were provided.
By the early nineteenth century Manchester had seen the opening of a number of other canals. These included:

Ashton Canal (opened 1794)
Rochdale Canal (opened 1804)
Manchester Bolton Bury Canal (opened 1799)

Within a generation, Manchester became one of the great canal centres of the new industrial society. One visitor compared it to Venice.

A map of the canals show Manchester at the centre of a network of canals providing transport links to Irish Sea (Liverpool) and the North Sea (Hull) as well as the large urban markets (London, Birmingham).

Among the products carried were corn, cotton and stone.

Railways

The railway system was the key transport development of the new industrial age. It allowed human beings to move faster than animal power for the first time in history. The Age of Steam Power was above all the Age of the Railway.

Manchester has a central place in the history of railways. In September 1830 steam trains began to travel for the first time on the **Liverpool and Manchester Railway**.

The Manchester terminus was in **Liverpool Road**. In the prospectus published by the promoters of the railway it was assumed that the main business would be carrying raw cotton, and manufactured goods.

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How many people would use the new and frightening mode of transport was unknown.

In its first full year of operation the Liverpool and Manchester carried 445,047 passengers! The railway was to move goods and raw materials in huge quantities but its major impact was on personal mobility. People enjoyed the thrill of travelling at speeds that a previous generation had never experienced.

As a result of the railways the country became 'smaller'. By the 1850s it was possible to travel distances in hours that within living memory had taken a complete day. The revolution was social and cultural as well as economic. The railways led to the introduction of a national timekeeping. Local times were replaced by Greenwich Mean Time ('railway time'). The foodstuffs on sale at the local markets became more varied and fresher as it became possible to transport foods faster and cheaper. Fish, for example, became available in inland towns in quantities and at prices that had never been possible in previous times when goods were moved on horse-drawn wagons or packhorses.

This increase in personal mobility meant that people were able to visit places that had previously been too expensive in terms of time and money. Cheap excursion trains meant that thousands of people travelled from the Lancashire cotton towns in 1851 to enjoy the spectacle of the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park in London. Similarly, the railways contributed to the success of the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857. Not only were the exhibits transported to Manchester by rail but so were thousands of the visitors, many of whom must have alighted at the Exhibition's own specially built station (Old Trafford). Thomas Cook organised many special trains, including a 'moonlight excursion' that left Newcastle-upon-Tyne at midnight arriving in Manchester at 7 a.m., and returning at 6 p.m.

One of the most startling consequences of the railway was the dramatic increase in people visiting the seaside. The history of the modern seaside resort was part of the history of the railways. Places such as Blackpool were little more than small villages in the early nineteenth century but once they were connected to the railway network they grew rapidly. Businessmen were able to make money from the visitors and day trippers who came from the inland industrial towns to enjoy the fresh air and other attractions.

By the 1860s hundreds of excursions trains were leaving Manchester and the neighbouring cotton towns in the holiday weeks for seaside resorts. Blackpool was the most commercialised of the Lancashire towns, with its piers, pleasure parks, winter gardens, big wheel and in 1894 its own version of the Eiffel Tower. This leisure economy depended on a sophisticated railway network. Within the shadow of Blackpool Tower was Central Station. It boasted many platforms and could unload the longest of excursions trains in minutes.

Another startling consequence of the railways was the growth of the middle-class suburbs. The Age of the Railway saw the birth of the commuter. This was evident on the Manchester **South Junction and Altrincham Railway**, opened in 1849. It can lay rightful claim to be the first commuter railway in the world. Those businessmen who had moved their families to live in the attractive (smoke free) villages of Sale and Altrincham and who waited of a morning to catch the train to Manchester, were the beginning of what was to become one of the major social changes associated with the modern city.

Manchester developed into one of the most important railway centres in the country. Railway companies competed hard to establish a presence in the Manchester market.

As early as 1839, Benjamin Love in his guide to the 'metropolis of manufacturers', Manchester As It Is, emphasized how the railway had already re-defined the way in which business was being done. He informed his

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readers that raw cotton was dispatched by rail from Liverpool at 3.00 am, arriving in Preston at 9.08 am, where it was converted into cloth by 11.30 am, and sent back as shirting material on the 4.20 pm train, ready to be put on sale the next morning. They were living in the 'very millennium of railway velocity'.

Following the success of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, railway companies competed to get their lines into the town. By the 1890s Manchester was served by six major railway stations

London Road Station
Victoria Station
Exchange Station
Central Station
Great Northern Station

They were all terminus stations, a fact that caused passengers inconvenience. Schemes to link the stations, most notably by an underground railway, came to nothing. In all these developments the city's first railway station on Liverpool Road was almost entirely forgotten, left to operate as an ordinary everyday goods station.

Railway stations and railway warehouses changed the urban landscape, and had plans to build a double-decker railway station close to Piccadilly been realised, the city centre would have undergone an even greater transformation.

Manchester's role in the railway revolution was second to none. It saw not only the first regular passenger railway trains but it was a Manchester man, the Quaker **George Bradshaw**, who was to compile and print what became the standard railway timetable guide, consulted even by Sherlock Holmes.

A few years earlier, John Edmondson, a clerk working for the Leeds and Manchester Railway invented the railway ticket.

Manchester was also an important centre for the manufacture of railway locomotives. The Beyer Peacock works at Gorton made locomotives for home and overseas railways. Unsurprisingly, no less than three major railway companies were to have Manchester workshops, the MSLR at Gorton and the LNWR at Longsight are not well remembered but the works of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway at Newton Heath have not been forgotten because of the subsequent history of the works' football team, who later became Manchester United.

Manchester Ship Canal

Probably the most ambitious transport development ever undertaken in the region occurred in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This was at a time when concerns were being voiced about the long-term health of economy of Manchester. The Manchester Ship Canal was regarded as a project that would boost the region's economy.

The idea of constructing a canal capable of carrying ocean-going ships from the river Mersey to Manchester had been suggested in the 1830s. It was in the 1880s that the idea was revived. In part this was driven by the idea of the need to create an alternative route that would challenge the both the railways and the port of Liverpool, both of which were accused of charging high prices.

Daniel Adamson, a Manchester engineer, was the leading figure in the canal scheme. At what was to be a famous meeting held at Adamson's house (The Firs, in Didsbury), the scheme was discussed and agreed by the region's leading businessmen and political leaders. A canal, some 35 miles in length was to be constructed, capable of carrying the largest ships of the time. This would mean that goods could be brought directly to Manchester rather than being offloaded at Liverpool and then carried by rail or road to Manchester.

Raising the enormous sums of money to build the canal was an issue and initially Adamson tried to raise some of the money by encouraging working people in the

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Lancashire cotton towns to buy shares in the scheme. “When the Manchester Ship Canal Company was created by a special Act of Parliament in 1885 it attracted 39,000 investors to its £10 shares, the largest number of shareholders ever recorded to that date in a private company”. This did not raise sufficient money and in the end the London banks stepped in to finance the project. Manchester City Council also became another important investor in scheme, making the project a quasi-municipal one. Eventually it was the City Council that was to be in control of the canal.

Construction of the canal began in 1887. In a public ceremony Lord Egerton cut the first sod of earth. Building the canal posed considerable engineering problems. The canal changed the landscape of the areas that it passed through. Locks needed to be built. A swing aqueduct replaced the stone aqueduct built by James Brindley at Barton.

The canal was eventually completed in 1893 and by the beginning of 1894 it was being used by ships; it was officially opened by Queen Victoria on 21 May 1894. The finished canal was 35 miles in length, and cost over £15 million to build. The docks at Manchester were extensive. The three main docks were located within Salford with four smaller docks in Stretford (Pomona Docks). The largest of the docks, Number 9 dock, was opened in 1905. It was on the site of Manchester racecourse.

The Manchester Ship Canal, if not the first ship canal in the world, was unique in its purpose of transforming an inland city over thirty miles from the sea into an international port. At its peak the construction provided employment for some 17,000 men. This was one of the largest civil engineering projects ever undertaken in this country. If the modern canal age began with the technical marvel of the Barton Aqueduct, it ended in an equally spectacular manner with steam shovels excavating the ‘Big Cut’ and Leader Williams’s swing aqueduct carrying the Bridgewater Canal over the Ship Canal.

Trade on the canal increased after a slow start and by 1913 the Ship Canal was the third largest port in Britain. It carried foodstuffs and cotton into Manchester.

One of the unplanned consequences of the Ship Canal was the opening of the **Trafford Industrial Park**. This was on land alongside the canal. The industrial park was the first of its kind in the world and it quickly attracted many large firms who were able to benefit from the excellent transport facilities. These firms included American companies such as Westinghouse and Ford. Later, it became home to food manufacturing firms such as Kelloggs.

By the 1920s Trafford Park employed tens of thousand of people. Moving the workers each day to work and then back to their homes meant that this area became one of the busiest centres of the tramway system. This availability of transport was of some importance when the recently established Manchester United was deciding on the location of a new stadium. Land was purchased in Trafford close to the industrial park, and it was here that in 1910 a new football stadium was opened. A well developed transport system was essential to get the crowds to and from the ground.

The Ship Canal declined after the 1950s and the last large ship unloaded around 1967. Sections of the canal were allowed to become derelict. The Manchester Ship Canal is now owned by a private company - Peel Holdings, and there are plans to open it once again for cargo ships. Number 6, 7, 8 and 9 Docks are now are now Salford Quays.

Bicycle

The bicycle has a long history and examples of early bicycles – velocipedes – can be seen in local museums and stately homes (e.g.Tatton). The modern bicycle (known as the safety bicycle) dates from the mid-1880s. Its distinguishing features were a chain drive and pneumatic rubber tyres. It proved to be an easier and safer bicycle to ride than existing models such as the

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'ordinary' or penny-farthing. Manchester had its bicycle enthusiasts. The Manchester Wheeler's Club is one of the country's oldest cycling clubs and can trace its origins back to the Manchester Athletic Bicycle Club, founded in 1883.

As a major engineering centre it is perhaps not surprising that Manchester played a part in the development of the modern bicycle. This was notably the development of the modern link chain (Renold). Dunlop, inventor of the pneumatic tyre, also had a (smelly) presence in the city. But, Manchester did not become a major manufacturing centre of bicycles as did Coventry and Birmingham.

The bicycle represented another revolution in transport. It altered the lives of those who took to the road on two wheels. At first the price of bicycles meant that only the better off could were able to them. Bicycles were priced in guineas rather than pounds shillings and pence. The 'cycling mania' of the mid 1890s was essentially a middle-class mania. It was not to be until the introduction of mass manufacturing methods in the early twentieth century that the price of bicycles fell, and it became possible for the better off working classes to purchase their own machines. This rise in bicycle ownership was to have implications on how people travelled to work and where they were to live.

The impact of the bicycle was to be seen in many areas of life. This new means of transport provided people with the opportunity to explore the countryside with a freedom that was not possible if one relied on the train or tram. By the mid 1890s the bicycle had become a common sight in the streets of Manchester. Manchester newspapers published regular cycling columns detailing the weekend runs into Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Cheshire as well as the exploits of cyclists who pedalled large distances.

Cycling tours to the continent were commonplace by the early twentieth century. An estimate in 1897 put the number of cyclists in the city of Manchester at 25,000.

The Manchester Guardian was one of the local newspapers that featured a regular cycling column. It reported an impressive 2,500 recreational cyclists leaving the city for the countryside during a single hour on a spring afternoon in 1897.

Bicycles appealed to youth, young men and women in particular. However, they were ridden by people of all ages. One of the most famous of all Manchester cyclists before the First World War was C.P. Scott, editor of the Manchester Guardian, who was a familiar figure cycling home nightly to Fallowfield from his office in Cross Street. He was 72 in 1918.

The bicycle was also taken up by political groups. Robert Blatchford's Clarion movement made much use of it in their efforts to spread the gospel of socialism. The Clarion Cyclists would cycle around the Manchester region, holding open-air meetings in the textile communities. The Suffragettes also used the bicycle in their campaigning to get parliament to give women the vote. Indeed, for many young women the bicycle was a symbol of freedom and modernity.

Cycle racing was also popular in Manchester and the city had its own track. It also boasted a number of the early champions in this sport. Later in the twentieth century it was to produce **Reg Davies**, a member of the Manchester Wheelers, who was in the 1950s the superstar of British cycling. He was one of the best-known sportsmen in Manchester even taking into account the many famous footballers and cricketers associated with the city. A statue of him can be seen in the Manchester Velodrome.

Concerns over global warming have led to a greater interest in the environmental and health benefits of cycling in recent years. This has resulted in local authorities investing some money in schemes to encourage cycling. These range from cycle lanes to the provision of cycles in the city centre. A self-service rental scheme has been trialled in the city. Manchester has been one city that has begun to acknowledge the benefits of cycling.

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Motor Car

The 1890s proved to be a crucial decade in the history of transport. The age of the steam engine began to be challenged by the internal combustion engine. These years saw the emergence of the first practical automobiles. At first, the motor-car was a rich man's hobby. Ordinary people could only look on with amazement. (Wind in the Willows, 1909, was an attack on the selfish motorocracy). But within a generation car ownership increased and the motor-car revolutionised the carrying both of people and goods.

Manchester businessmen were not slow to recognize its potential. The city saw the establishment of a number of motor-car manufacturers, most of whom had brief lives. But not all did.

The most famous motor-car in the world was to be born and, initially at least, manufactured in Manchester. A local engineer, Henry Royce began trying to improve existing cars before deciding to produce his own motor-car in his small works in Hulme. His partnership with another motor-car enthusiast, Charles Stewart Rolls, was to be sealed following their meeting at Manchester's grandest and recently opened hotel, the Midland Hotel in 1904 (a railway hotel!). The outcome was a car that within a few years became an international synonym for excellence. **Rolls Royce** cars were manufactured in the city until the company decided to move to Derby in 1908.

Manchester also developed as a major manufacturing centre for motor vehicles aimed at the comfortable middle classes. The city attracted Henry Ford. He had visited Manchester and other potential sites in Britain before deciding to set up the company's first European factory in the Trafford Park Industrial Estate. It was here that the famous **Model T** was assembled.

Ford continued to produce cars in Trafford Park for almost twenty years. In the difficult economic conditions of the 1920s the company re-assessed the economic advantages of being located in Manchester - 'Britain's workshop and storehouse' - and took the decision to establish its manufacturing works at Dagenham. By 1931 Ford had shifted production. The world's largest car company no longer produced vehicles in Manchester.

However, this did not leave Manchester without a vehicle manufacturer. Crossley Motors Ltd, whose factory was in Openshaw was an important manufacturer. In the 1920s it was producing higher priced vehicles rather than the emerging mass market. Car production, however, was not to be its future. In 1938 Crossley's ceased car production and decided to concentrate on manufacturing commercial vehicles, notably motor buses.

Car ownership increased dramatically in the second half of the twentieth century. The social consequences of this revolution in personal transport were profound. It altered the way people lived and the motor car quickly became the most desirable of all consumer goods. It was desired because it gave people unprecedented personal mobility, freeing them from railway and bus timetables. It altered how people spent their leisure time. It affected where the lived and how and when they travelled to work.

The motor car altered the landscape of the city. New roads were built. The **Mancunian Way** was opened by no less a person than the prime minister, Harold Wilson. The multi-story car park became one of the most distinctive building types of the late twentieth century. The parking meter became a familiar, if detested, piece of street furniture. At times, the motor car seemed to threaten the very existence of the urban world. The vehicle that liberated the twentieth century also needed to be controlled. It was a frighteningly powerful force. Neither in the Age of the Horse or in the Age of the Railway had it been found necessary to paint all the roads in the centre of cities.

The Age of the Automobile was not without it costs. The rising curve of deaths and

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serious injuries due to motor vehicles was an obvious cost. Manchester's first road accident fatality was a woman called Mary who was killed in 1901. By the second half of the century there was also a growing awareness of the pollution costs associated with motor vehicles.

Civil Aviation and Airports

Manchester was enthusiastic in recognising the potential of the aeroplane in the early years of the twentieth century. The Edwardian period was the age of the aviation pioneer, when the rumour of a plane could draw crowds usually associated with a royal visit or a victorious football team. Manchester was a terminus in the great air races. Early airfields were built at Trafford Park, Alexandra Park and Northenden.

It also produced its own aviation heroes. **A.V. Roe**, who was to establish his aeroplane manufacturing works in Manchester (Brownsfield Mill, Ancoats), was one of the earliest English aviators. Ten years after Louis Bleriot had flown across the English Channel, two Manchester men, Alcock and Brown, flew the Atlantic.

In the late 1920s, Manchester Corporation sought to establish its own municipal airfield, in part to encourage the development of civil aviation. The first site selected was at Barton, which proved to be an inappropriate choice. There was fierce competition between Liverpool and Manchester about which would be the region's major airport.

In 1938 Manchester opened a new municipal airport at **Ringway**, a site then outside the city's boundary. The airport expanded greatly during the Second World War.

After the war it became clear that civil aviation was to be another transport revolution, one that had broad similarities with those that had gone before.

At first, it was only the rich who could afford to fly, but as fares became cheaper more people took to the air. Novelty flights such as the ones that flew from Ringway to Blackpool to see the illuminations in 1949 were still in vogue. But the revolution in civil aviation was underway. In 1962 Ringway was renamed **Manchester Airport**.

By the end of the 1960s tens of thousands of ordinary people were flying, many for the first time, from Manchester to enjoy the sunshine of the Mediterranean. The age of the package flight, the equivalent of the cheap excursion train, had arrived. The leisure economy of the Lancashire seaside resorts was challenged and found wanting by many of their traditional customers.

Manchester City Council played a central role in the development of what was to become Manchester International Airport. It pursued a determined policy of independence, resisting the forces of central government. Manchester International Airport became the symbol of a progressive city and region.

In a move that echoed Manchester Corporation's decisive intervention in supporting the Ship Canal scheme so Manchester City council and later the Greater Manchester Council can be seen as playing a crucial role in the development of a prestigious international airport.

The relentless increase in air travel was astonishing. Passenger numbers rose from 200,000 in 1954 to over 20 million in 2004, making Manchester the country's third largest airport on this measure. In a single month - July 2004 - Manchester handled 2.274 million passengers, a daily average of over 73,000.

It is also important to recognise that the growth of the airport could not have occurred without changes in other parts of the transport system. The 1990s saw considerable investments in improving the road connections to the airport. A new railway service was opened in 1993 that ran directly from Manchester Piccadilly to the airport station.

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Buses and Trams

Before the establishment of horse-drawn passenger coaches the only option for the majority of people to reach a destination in another part of the town in the early nineteenth century was to walk. Ownership of a private carriage was only for the very wealthy. One important consequence of this was that most people lived within walking distance of their place of work. This was all to change as travelling relatively short-distances in a horse-drawn omnibus became part of town life.

Towns expanded rapidly in the industrial revolution. For example, the population of Manchester and Salford was 350,000 in 1851 compared to 90,000 in 1801. A new middle class began to settle in out-of-town districts. A demand for public transport emerged.

In 1824 **John Greenwood** established a horse-drawn coach service in Manchester and Salford. It connected the affluent suburbs with the city centre. The service ran at specific times several times a day. The fare was sixpence (6d). Greenwood's service pre-dates the well-known coach service set up in London by George Shillibeer by five years and can be regarded as the first such passenger coach service in the world.

The early omnibuses were 'little more than a box on wheels', and offered accommodation for eight or nine inside, with perhaps another three up aloft with the driver. As the demand for such services increased the design of omnibuses improved. They also became capable of carrying a much larger number of passengers.

Greenwood's success led to the establishment of other omnibus companies though Greenwood's omnibuses were to remain the leading firm in Manchester and Salford. By the middle of the nineteenth century a number of firms were providing services on the principal commuter routes in Manchester and Salford. Passenger numbers increased, especially as fares were reduced. Such services required controls and the local authority began to establish regulations for the safe running of services. There were many issues to deal with, including the location of 'bus stops and the treatment of the horses that pulled the 'buses.

In 1861, Greenwood pioneered the first street tramway in the region on the route from Pendleton to Manchester. In order to eliminate wasteful competition, negotiations between the largest local coach companies resulted in the establishment of the Manchester Carriage Company in 1865. Demands to install tram rack on existing roads brought the local authorities into this area of city life.

The 1870 Tramways Act gave local authorities the powers to construct tramways but they were not allowed to operate them. Tramways had to be leased to independent operators. By 1875 Salford and Manchester councils had reached agreement on a scheme for a municipal tramway system. By the mid-1880s the track had increased in length, and on it ran omnibuses operated by private companies. Greenwoods remained the leading firm. The business included 180 tramcars and a stable of 3,800 horses.

Competition was fierce and the year 1888 was notable for the introduction by the Manchester Carriage Company of the penny fare on its trams. The business continued to expand and by the mid-1890s, the Manchester Carriage & Tramways Company owned 5,244 horses, 515 tramcars, 26 horse-drawn omnibuses, and 71 cabs. These were housed in 20 depots throughout the region. These included extensive stabling establishments. At All Saints for example, the company had a large depot for tramcars on the ground floor and stables on three upper floors.

The development of these services combined with lower fares made urban society more mobile. Lower fares benefited both businesses and consumers. It meant that travel within the city and the suburbs was no longer the exclusive province of the wealthy. By the start of the twentieth century early morning omnibus and tram

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services meant that skilled and semi-skilled workers were also travelling to their workplace. The tram was especially important in helping to unshackle the working classes from the city centre. The development of suburban tram lines offering cheap fares allowed the respectable working classes to consider moving out of the city centre and travelling into work.

Trams offered an escape for at least some of those families caged in the poverty of Ancoats. The workers' tram became an important feature of the city in by the beginning of the twentieth century. A crucial factor in the success of what have been called the 'gondolas of the people' was the cheap fares and the convenience of catching a tram. Many suburban railway routes felt the pinch of this competition. Late evening services also began to transform their leisure time activities, giving a new life to the city centre. Women would catch the tram for a shopping trip to the town centre.

By the 1890s onwards the electrification of the system was underway. Blackpool ran the first electric tram service in 1885.

The arrival of **electric trams** also helped to establish a world of commercialised leisure. Many of the vast crowds of supporters attending sporting events – football and cricket matches – travelled to and from the game by tram. People seeking more genteel pleasures such as a band concert in a municipal park might also catch a tram to the park. When Manchester City Council purchased the vast Heaton Park estate in around 1904 and opened it as a public park, it was pointed out that although it was located in the north of the city the tram made it accessible to all Mancunians.

The age of the private bus company was coming to an end. At the time - the age of the horse-drawn tram was becoming the age of the electric tram. By the early twentieth century Manchester and Salford councils had taken over the control and running of the tram network. Under their control the system was extended and the rolling stock improved. Much investment was directed at developing routes linking different towns. The numbers using the system continued to increase. The growth in the system was breathtaking. Fares were cheap enough that the trams were used by all classes. By 1914 it was possible to travel from Manchester to Littleborough or to Wigan for six pennies.

By 1913 the main tram routes out of the city (Stockport Road, Palatine Road, Rochdale Road, Oldham Road, Cheetham Hill Road, Hyde Road, Ashton Old Road) were among the most intensively used in the country. The initiatives continued into the twentieth century. Motor buses and trolley buses were introduced, the former playing a major part supporting the development of the non car-owning housing estates in those areas between the radial roads which carried the trams. Manchester was often at the forefront of new developments nationally. In short, cheap municipal transport was to be a key force in making the twentieth-century city. It was a factor that central to the urban world. No city was capable of operating without that system of trams and buses.

One of the benefits of municipal ownership was a greater cooperation between different districts, allowing passengers to travel more easily and cheaply outside of their own towns.

Metrolink

One of the key features of the railway system in Manchester was the terminal station. This posed obvious problems for passengers who had to change stations on arrival in the city. Schemes for lines to connect stations were put forward, including the building of an underground line between London Rd Station and Victoria Station in 1901. The idea of an underground connection (the **Pic-Vic line**) was revived in the 1960s.

A solution was finally provided in 1993 as part of a more ambitious scheme - the Metrolink. In 1987 the government agreed to the scheme, having resolved the difficult questions surrounding its finance.

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The original light railway scheme included six lines, the final plan resulted in the construction of three lines.

Bury - Manchester Victoria line
Manchester Victoria - Altrincham line
Manchester city centre - Piccadilly line.

These were opened during 1992. A further line running from Cornbrook to Eccles (Salford Quays) was opened in 1999-2000. The GMPTE continued campaigning for realisation of the original scheme. Government funding was again a major stumbling block. Central government finally agreed to the plan to extend the Metrolink system as well as upgrade existing lines. This is now underway. By 2008 the scheme was moving forward. For example, train services ran for the last time on the Oldham-Rochdale loop line in October 2009. The new light transit railway line is scheduled to open to Oldham in 2011 and to Rochdale in 2012.

You can listen to and watch this history 'No Anorak Required' at www.noanorak.org.uk

Written by Terry Speake, 2009.
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