

THE INDUSTRY THAT DIDN'T QUITE.....PICKERING'S OF TWEEDMOUTH.

A BUS MANUFACTURER IN AN UNLIKELY PLACE.

If you think that Berwick was never likely to be a centre of the motor industry, then you'd be wrong! In the wake of Gottlieb Daimler and Otto Benz and the internal combustion engine a century or more ago, the British motor trade developed quickly and a variety of firms went into production. They made everything from steam lawnmowers (that was the Lancashire Steam Motor Co., later to name itself Leyland) to motor buses. That didn't take place until the infamous Locomotives Act of 1865 was repealed in 1896 – but that was not before the weel-kent Richard Waldie-Griffiths had been picked up by the local constabulary for driving along Bridge Street, Berwick, in the wee small hours without a 'red flag' man in front.

The first recorded bus services started in 1898 but were not initially successful. That was in Edinburgh and that would be followed up by the Scottish Motor Traction – the 'SMT' – who did much pioneer work in the mechanical development of buses, even to building their own – which were extremely successful. Locally Cuthbertson had motor wagonettes from 1904 running between Bamburgh and Seahouses to connect with the trains.

From 1900 on to the 1930s I reckon there must have been c.150 firms who built buses; there might have been even more who built only goods vehicles. But to get down to the subject – F.G.Pickering, later to be Co.Ltd.

Before going further, my apologies to readers of the original document. When I was researching newspapers I went to Colindale to see hard copies of the two 'normal' newspapers from Berwick – Tweedmouth being part of the town. Being local to Berwick these were the two papers we always read. But they didn't provide much information. Only in 2019 did Kevin Graham, from Berwick Record Office, contact me to say he had found a lot of information about Pickering in the 'Berwickshire News' – a paper I never read as it was really aimed at Berwickshire readers.

So, thanks to the help from Kevin, I was able to establish a great deal more about F.G. Pickering and the Tweedmouth business which corrected what I recorded in the original document. I will explain that later. From this point almost all information comes from the 'Berwickshire News'.

The firm was registered in 1904, well ahead of many well-known manufacturers:-

The 'Berwickshire News' dated **5th January 1904** reported:-

The Highgate Implement Works has just been registered with a capital of £4,000 in £1.00 shares to acquire the business carried on by F.G. Pickering at the Highgate Implement Works, Tweedmouth, of Lillie & Co.....

The subscribers are:- F.G. Pickering, 84, Main Street, Tweedmouth, agricultural engineer; Mrs. C.H. Pickering, 84, Main Street, Tweedmouth; Christopher Tait, Main Street, Tweedmouth, grocer; Robert Tennant, 13, Yard Heads, Tweedmouth; Miss F. Tait, Main Street, Tweedmouth. No public issue. Number of Directors not to be less than two or more than five. F.G. Pickering is the first Managing Director, qualification £20.00; remuneration of M.D fixed by agreement.

At that time Milnes-Daimler was the biggest producer with 600 buses in use in 1907. At the time I began research into the Pickering business little was known about Pickering or his Company.

I had an advert (undated) from a 'Map of the Environs of Berwick' in which F.G. Pickering, Highgate Works, Tweedmouth, and a showroom at 80, Main Street, Tweedmouth (where the 'Spar' shop now stands) had a 'Motor Car and Cycle Works'. He advertised that he had 'put down new plant for the production of motor cars and cycles' and would 'give estimates for any class of motor car or cycle, also motor haulage wagons'.

The first real intimation of his 'motor' activities comes in one of the then motor trade journals.

This one is from 1905 when Messrs. F.G. Pickering & Co., Tweedmouth, exhibited a 2-ton petrol wagon, with silencer and air-cooled engine. It had Pickering's patent 'twin-spoke wheels and a total weight of c.35 cwt'. That was exhibited at Olympia between the **10th and 18th February 1905**. His next exhibition appearance was at Cordingley's 10th Annual Automobile Exhibition in London on **18th March 1905** with the same vehicle. He was in good company at both with Foden, Durham-Churchill, Garrett, Clarkson and Leyland, etc., etc.

But he was moving even further. He had planned to show a double-deck bus at the March Show. For whatever reason, it was a late arrival, missing the main write-up of the show, but there long enough to be photographed in situ at the exhibition. The 'Motor Traction' of **5th April 1905** has a description of its mechanics. It had a 4-cyl., 35-40 hp Pickering engine 'which develops its power at 750 rpm'. There was a dual ignition system, Pickering patented wheels with a fixed centre flange, and steering-mounted controls for throttle, air and for both ignition systems. It seated 34 passengers.

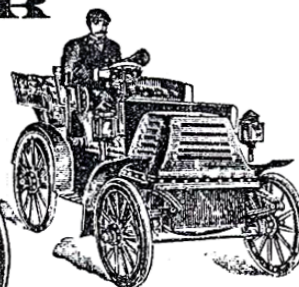
The magazine reports thus:-

'we understand that, although the company have an output of 300 vehicles per annum, they are kept more than fully engaged'. Somehow I think was ever such a slight exaggeration – bearing in mind the size of the Highgate Works. There is no record of what happened to that double-decker. It was probably returned to Berwick and re-used in a different format.

THE BORDER

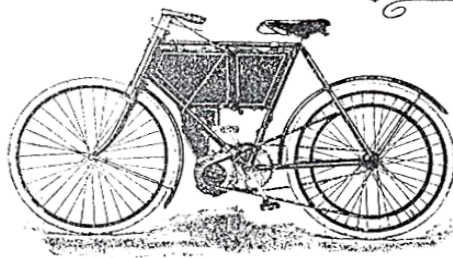
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MOTOR CAR AND CYCLE WORKS



Having put down **NEW PLANT** for the production of **MOTOR CARS & CYCLES**, I beg to state I am in a position to execute

All Classes of Work at Moderate Charges



Estimates given for any class of
**MOTOR CAR or
CYCLE**, also
MOTOR HAULAGE WAGONS.

Replacement Parts kept in Stock.

F. G. PICKERING

PROPRIETOR

ADDRESS—

HIGHGATE WORKS, BERWICK=ON=TWEED

SHOWROOM—

80 MAIN STREET, TWEEDMOUTH.

The Berwickshire News has three reports:-

16th June 1905:-

Motor Building at Tweedmouth:-

The firm of Messrs. G.F. Pickering(sic) & Co. Ltd, Tweedmouth, motor builders and engineers, have, we understand, just entered into a contract to supply the Italian Government with twelve motor buses, each to carry 24 persons. Messrs. Pickering have lately completed an order for the Liverpool Warehousing Co., supplying them with several waggons capable of carrying three tons each. The work of the Company, it is satisfactory to know, is giving every satisfaction to their customers.

Then, on 1st December 1905:-

Successful undertaking by a Local Engineering Firm:-

The firm of Messrs. F.G. Pickering and Coy., Limited, Tweedmouth, have just completed the contract for a number of motor buses for Italy and we are pleased to state that they have all passed the severe tests required by the Italian Transport and Government Officials previous to granting certificates.

Test No. 1 was that the buses should climb a hill 1:7 at a speed of six miles an hour, with 25 cwt of lead, and 16 persons averaging not less than 11 stone. Test No. 2 was that the buses should return down the above mentioned hill at twelve miles an hour, and, applying brakes to stop bus in its own length. Test No. 3 – Running 25 miles without stopping with full load. It may be mentioned that the engineers present were very much pleased with the working of the buses and these satisfactory tests will very likely lead to more orders from the same source.

This appears on Friday 22nd December 1905:-

Large Order for a Local Engineering Firm:-

Following up the successful completion of the Italian Government Order, we are pleased to state that Messrs. F.G. Pickering and Co. Ltd, engineers, have received an order for over £50,000 worth of two and three ton motor buses and lorries. This order, along with the others in hand, will mean considerable extension of their already well-equipped works, and, at the same time, give employment to something like 100 more men. It is gratifying to know that such a good and substantial order has been secured for this young and enterprising firm.

'Motor Traction' of **4th January 1906** contains a photo of a single-deck bus, one of three built by Pickering and bodied by the London coachbuilder, Bayley's, of Newington Causeway. These three were sold to an operator in Italy, no doubt part of the Italian Government order mentioned above. The photo was taken at the London works.

Once the Italian order had been completed, the next buses would go into production – an order for three single-deckers for the Penrith & District Motor Service Co. Ltd. These were to operate between Penrith and Pooley Bridge, at the foot of Ullswater, where they would connect with the Ullswater lake steamers.

This appears on 24th April 1906:-

TWEEDMOUTH BUILT MOTOR OMNIBUSES – TRIAL AT PENRITH

The Penrith Observer of Tuesday April 17th, says:-

Several days late, the first of the omnibuses purchased by the Penrith and District Motor Service Co. Ltd, arrived in the town on Thursday afternoon, and attracted much notice. In the afternoon the vehicle was taken for a trial trip, for the purpose of testing the machinery before being taken over by the company. Mr. Beaumont, jun., representing his father, Mr. W. Worby Beaumont, London, consulting engineer to the company, and also to the Automobile Club, came specially to Penrith to ascertain the capabilities of the car, and he conducted an exhaustive investigation under conditions far more severe than are ever likely to be met with in ordinary working.

The omnibus – the first of three – has been built by Messrs. F.G. Pickering, Tweedmouth, Berwick-on-Tweed. The engines will be from 40 to 45 horse power. The vehicle has a length of over 18 feet, and the bus body painted red and blue. It rests on a frame of the best steel, 5 inches by 2½ inches, which

would effectually prevent any injury to passengers from buckling in the event of an accident. The rear wheels are the firm's patent twin tyres – two wheels ingeniously coupled together – and single tyred wheels in front; the body of the bus is suspended on special springs which reduce the vibration to a minimum. On the roof 12 cwt. of luggage can be carried, and on Thursday coils of wire rope were put on the top of the bus. The inside of the vehicle is very neatly decorated, the glass sides can be taken out in sections, and the seats are upholstered in red leather. Messrs Pickering have made another omnibus of the same type for the company, and also a chassis. The charabanc bodies, which can readily be changed for those now in use are being made by Mr. John Kidd and Mr. F. Birkett, coach builders, Penrith. The omnibus bodies carry eight passengers on each side, but the charabancs will accommodate 24 persons – arranged in six rows of four passengers each. A party of directors and others interested in the welfare of the company went out with the car to watch the inspection. The makers were represented by Mr. F.G. Pickering, managing director, who some nine or ten years ago was with Messrs. Tinkler and Co. The Motor Co. were represented by Mr. Tinkler, manager, Mr. H. Jackson, director, Mr. W. Thompson, secretary, and others, there being altogether fourteen passengers and the driver on the vehicle. The drive was by way of Castlegate and Red Hills to near Penruddock. On Slapestones the first trial of stopping, starting, and brake power was made, this hill being a representative one. Another was made on the sharp rise out of Stainton, but the principal was on the stiffer gradient beyond Newbiggin Pike. On a quiet part of the road, the machinery was critically examined, and appeared to entirely please Mr. Beaumont, who made a few suggestions for minor changes. At this point proof was also given of the security provided by two powerful clutches which drop at the rear of the car and prevent any accident from running backward. The engines worked very well, and the smell of petrol experienced when the engines were started soon passed off. On the return journey, in a straight half-mile with a clear road the test showed that the engines were capable of driving the car at the full legal speed – a more definite statement as to the velocity attained is not necessary. Penrith was reached again after an absence of 2½ hours. Pending the completion of the second car, Messrs. Pickering lent the company an omnibus somewhat smaller than the one which underwent its trials, and both have since been in use. Those concerned regard the prospects of the service as being very bright, and a great development of the trade of the district is anticipated. The ordinary car is now in regular work, and during the holidays has had excellent loads, so that everyone concerned has been in an optimistic frame of mind.

We know that three buses actually operated in service, probably the only Pickering buses to do so in Britain. They were single-deckers. The background to the Penrith & District Motor Services Ltd. is somewhat confused when one looks at all the various documents. It was incorporated on 17th January 1906 with a registered office at 18, King Street, Penrith. Two of the Directors were also on the Board of the Ullswater steamer company and the prospectus for Penrith & District indicated that the lake steamers had carried 38,000 passengers in the 1905 season of whom 9,000 had been through bookings from the railway. Agreements were duly entered into with Ullswater N & T, and the LNW Railway. An order was placed immediately with Pickering for three buses, ostensibly to be able to operate at the start of the Easter holiday on 9th April 1906.

This is where things become somewhat complicated.

I have a record of the names of the directors and officers.

I have records of the licensing of the buses – when they did arrive.

I have another record, taken from the 'Commercial Motor', relating to the Company's Annual Report of January/February 1907.

The last named indicates that the Board members reporting in 1907 were not those who had set up in 1906. In fact, the change in ownership must have occurred within weeks of incorporation. Furthermore, the buses, having arrived in April 1906 were registered in the P&D name and address but licences were in the names of two other men, Tom Siddle, Crown Hotel, Penrith, and the Armstrong Motor Company (Fred Armstrong) of the George Hotel, Penrith. The names of Armstrong & Siddle would figure in the later transport history of Penrith.

The buses did go into service in April 1906 albeit a few days later than hoped on the Penrith - Pooley Bridge service. This is what the 'Penrith Observer' reported on **Tuesday 10th April**:-

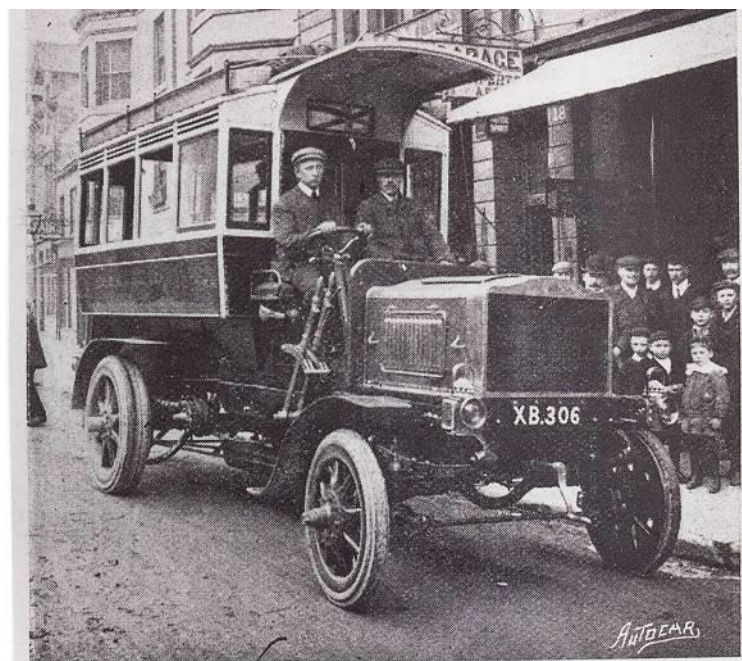
'The motor omnibuses for the new service between Penrith and Ullswater are expected to commence running regularly on Thursday (12th April). One is to undergo tests tomorrow on hilly roads in the Kirkoswald district. Last evening, officials of the company expected one car to arrive during the night. The cars will accommodate 24 when seats are arranged charabanc fashion and 16 when the omnibus body is used in inclement weather.'

The following Tuesday, 17th April, the newspaper reported that 'the omnibuses have been very full indeed. Last night, special trips had to be run to get all the booked passengers back to Penrith in time for trains to Manchester, Carlisle, etc.' There was very obvious pressure on buses and drivers.

To put things into context I have to go back in time much further. The railway reached Penrith in 1846 and the branch line to Keswick and Workington came c.1860. The advent of the lines was the start of mass tourism opening up the area. Penrith became the gateway to the northern Lake District and people were clamouring to see more of Ullswater, the nearest lake to the railway. At that time facilities between Penrith Station and Ullswater could only be by horse-drawn wagonettes. Some visitors just walked and others were carried by the carts of enterprising local farmers. There was a proposal to construct a railway branch line from Penrith to Ullswater which did not come to fruition. However, horse-drawn transport was insufficient to cope with the large potential and, since mechanisation was about, then the Penrith Company tried a bold experiment in buying these three buses. Even so, they would still have to be duplicated by the wagonettes. At the same time, S.M.T (Scottish Motor Traction) was developing their services very successfully around Edinburgh, with folk flocking on their buses to the Forth Bridge.

How SMT solved their reliability troubles with their buses is another story, but they had done no differently than had the Penrith company.

Prima facie, the bus manufacturer had done as much as he could. The buses, themselves, had had to be driven from Berwick to Penrith – about 110 miles – and had withstood that journey.



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A Pickering motor 'bus for service in Penrith.

The first Pickering bus in Penrith – April 1906

The picture above is the only good record of a Pickering vehicle on the road. It appeared in a contemporary 'Autocar'. I have identified the location as King Street, Penrith, and the location of the Registered Office of the Company. It was probably taken on the first day in service (12th April 1906) doubtless on its inaugural journey. The picture would have been taken before 24th April. The registration 'XB 306' is a mystery, 'XB' is a London plate and the bus must have been registered by Bayley before delivery to Penrith. Its correct number would have been 'AO 411' which did not come into effect until 24th April.

These are the details of the Pickering buses taken from the registration documents. These contain a welter of minor detail about weight, etc., but do not give the name of the manufacturer. All three were owned by Penrith & District but were licenced to Tom Siddle and the Armstrong Motor Company. The livery was blue and red, with the upper part, cream.

AO 411 --- registered 24th April 1906 as a motor omnibus, convertible to charabanc. It was converted fully to charabanc on 1st June 1906. It was the only one of the three to be given the 16 seat omnibus body.

AO 412 --- also registered on 24th April but delivered with the 24 seat charabanc body.

AO 429 --- registered on 26th May, delivered with a charabanc body.

Penrith & District bought another bus at the same time:-

AO 437 --- this was registered on 23rd June. There is no indication of the manufacturer on the registration. One source has suggested it was a Milnes-Daimler, more likely it was a Durham-Churchill, but it was not a Pickering vehicle.

Later in 1906, Penrith & District tested a Darracq-Serpellet steam bus on the Ullswater route which was reported to be very satisfactory but is not thought to have been bought. In 1907 they bought a Durham-Churchill, AO 545, and must have had other vehicles between then and 1914 but no records have come to light.

The three Pickering buses were withdrawn from service on 20th August 1906 abruptly following an accident. Nothing more was heard of them until they were delicensed early in 1916.

This would be a disaster for Pickering. Yet they had given yeoman service! The 'Penrith Observer' again: - 'The public patronage of the service has been very good but the numerous breakdowns and mishaps of various kinds have convinced the directors that the particular pattern of vehicle is not suited to the district. At no point is there a quarter of a mile of level ground...and the gear was constantly being changed. The strain put on the engines was excessive...'

In the period from Easter 1906 to August 1906, 7,400 passengers had been carried – no doubt some by wagonette – but the performance of the buses in the circumstances had been very good.

The deciding factor was this accident at Eamont Bridge which is a narrow, hump-backed bridge, now under traffic light control, on the A6, just south of Penrith and at the bottom of Kemplay Bank.

One of the charabancs was on its way into Penrith with the horse coach from the Crown Hotel following it. A private car overtook the coach and followed the bus. Part way up Kemplay Bank, the bus driver could not get up the hill. He started to go backwards to reverse into the nearby lane. The car driver also reversed out of the way.

By this time the horse coach had reached the brow of the bridge, failed to realise that the bus was reversing, and carried on forward. There was a collision causing some of the coach passengers to be thrown on to the road. The accident was not the fault of the bus driver and was accepted as such.

Thus the buses were withdrawn – I suggest – not because of the accident but the inability of the bus to take the hill. Thus departed Pickering's buses from service. In fairness to Pickering he used the engineering methods of his time. The clutch was leather on metal; they were chain-driven – and the

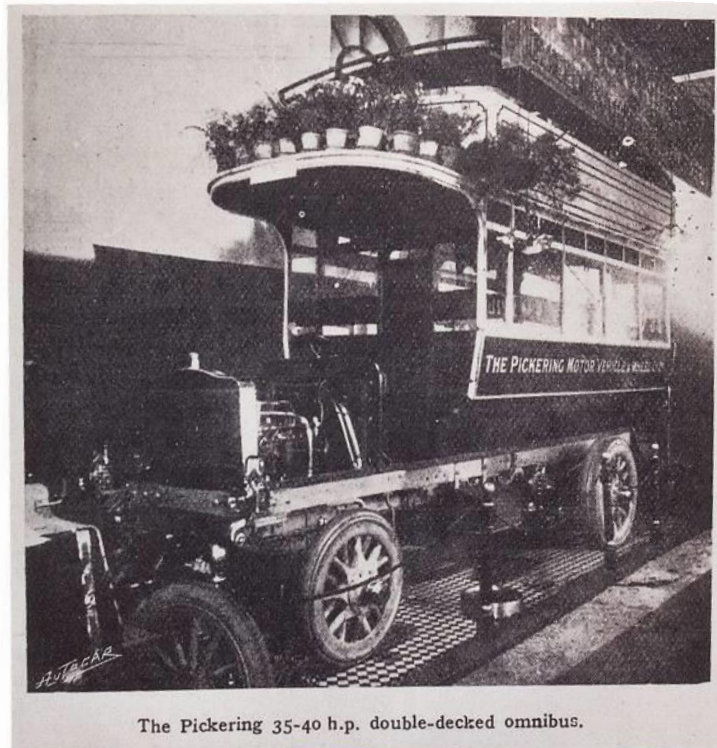
buses were being used very intensively judging by the number of passengers carried in those months. We'll never know what defects they really had.

Looking back to Edinburgh's SMT – they were operating similarly around Edinburgh. Hordes of passengers travelled to and from the Forth Bridge, for example, and their buses were placed under pressure. The then Chief Engineer, Willie Thomson, set out a specification required for his fleet. I think the only firms to meet it were Maudslay and Fiat. SMT went on to build their own buses, the Lothians, which were very successful, the last of them still running in Galashiels in 1930.

Bayleys Ltd., who built the bodies, had premises at 42, Newington Causeway, SE1 and 142, Uxbridge Road, Shepherd's Bush. Kelly's Directory for 1906 quotes Bayleys as manufacturers of 'vans, wagons, water vans, fire escapes, omnibuses, motor vans as well as being wheelwrights and tyre smiths'.

The Penrith saga was not the end of Pickering's troubles. The business went into liquidation in November 1906 but not before Pickering had sold a lorry to H.O. Short, flour millers, Tweedmouth. This had been delivered not long before the firm collapsed and the dispute between Short and Pickering for repairs to what was considered an unsuitable vehicle found its way into Berwick County Court – the first case there for twenty-five years.

The '**Berwick Advertiser**' for 23rd August 1907 contains a long report of the case. It seems that Pickering had 'thrown the lorry together' in his last days of working. Not that Short had done everything right. His driver started up in reverse at the Tweed Dock and the lorry tilted over the dockside and had to be hauled up. Some of the exchanges in Court are amusing – 'His Honour' – they (Pickering) only guarantee against faulty workmanship. If you buy a horse without a head, you cannot complain but you can complain if the other limbs are wrong.' Judgment was entered for the plaintiff – the Foreman of the Jury asked if they would be allowed their expenses. 'I'm afraid a grateful country only allows you one shilling each!'



The Pickering 35-40 h.p. double-decker omnibus.

Figure 1 Pickering's double-decker on show in London in 1906. The bodywork appears to be by Bayleys.

What about the personalities? What about the premises? Pickering had a showroom at 80, Main Street, and at sometime, also 84, Main Street. His works, Highgate Works, were at the top of the Main Street, and taken over afterwards by A.C. Burn. Only the Court papers give any clue to the staff. George Shand had been Working Foreman for Pickering for two years and 'had designed the first motor wagon driven about Berwick'. At the time of the Court he was no longer employed by Pickering. Pickering used an engineer from Glasgow, David Hope, to train Short's driver for several weeks. Otherwise there is a reference to the Company Secretary, a Mr. Lumsden.

Thus Pickering departed and Berwick lost its motor industry.

One might be forgiven for thinking that little vehicle development was taking place contemporary with Pickering.

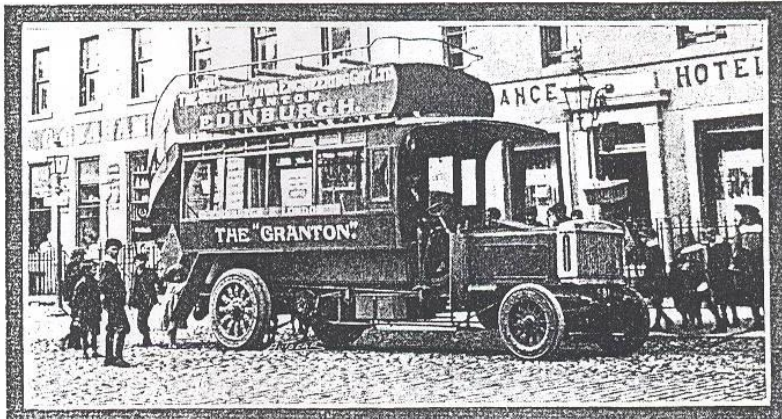
One of the interesting test runs at that time was done by Fiat and reported by the 'Commercial Motor'. Fiat set out to produce something that would bear comparison with anything on the market at the time and, to prove it; they arranged a through run from London to Edinburgh. It was non-stop - in so far as the engine was never allowed to stop - with meals eaten on board except at a couple of places where they did stay long enough to eat. That was the chance to refuel and oil and grease.

The bus left central London at 0810 on Friday, 26th January 1906, arriving in Edinburgh at 1615 the next day, Saturday. The route was the Great North Road, with a short stop at Berwick where it arrived at 1152 on Saturday morning, remaining there for an hour for them to eat lunch on board. Unsurprisingly the magazine quotes 'at 11.52 am we have reached the border town of Berwick, crossing the long and narrow bridge with some difficulty, in consequence of the fact that we met a drove of cattle in the middle!' The magazine article tends to describe more about the scenery and the food they ate rather than the technical points of the run. Fuel consumption was about 6 mpg.

The Fiat was not the only bus to be tested between London and Edinburgh. There was a flurry of vehicle building going on at the time. Another one to pass through Berwick on test was the 'Granton', built by The Scottish Motor Engineering Co. Ltd., of Granton, Edinburgh. It travelled south on 26th August 1906. The write-up in the 'Motor Traction' was very favourable. It had averaged more than 11 mph for the journey - at a time when the maximum speed for that type of vehicle was 12 mph.

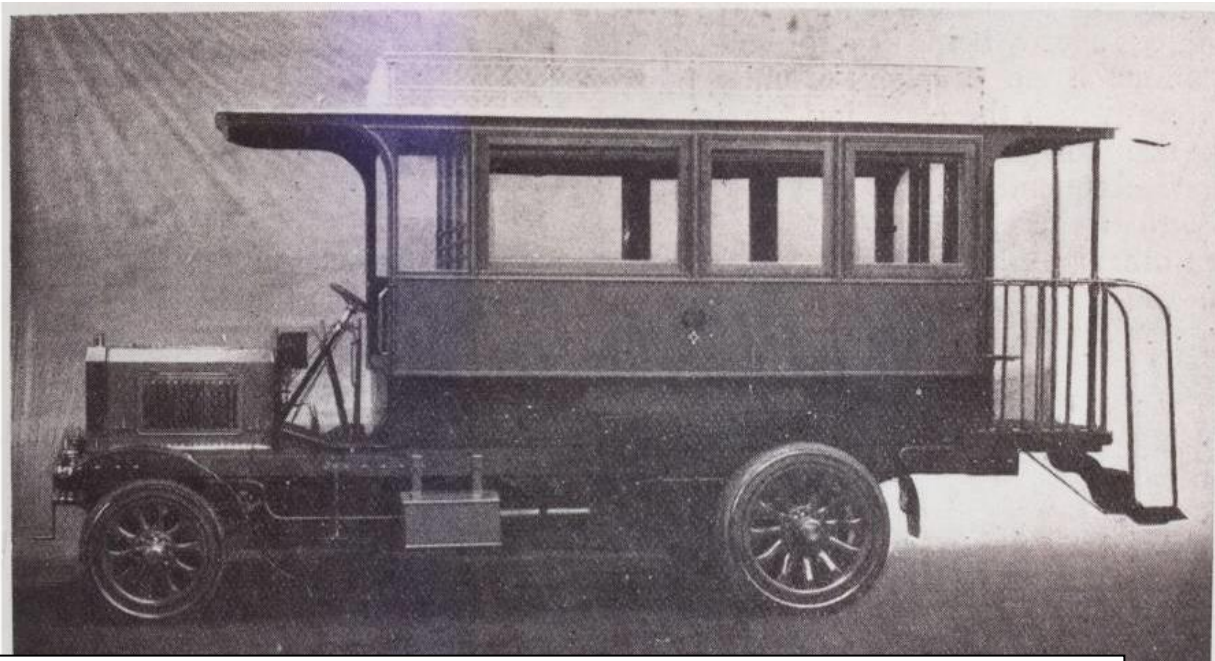


A lunch time stop on Bridge Street, Berwick-upon-Tweed



A 'Granton' bus was shown, above, at the Edinburgh Motor Show in 1907 but no more buses were produced after 1907 despite the good reports.

It would be another short seven years before the motor industry took off, pushed by the events of 1914. When that ended there was a surfeit of lorries capable of being used as, or converted into, buses and came the start of the years of unbridled competition in running buses – but that is another story.



One of the Pickering's buses with bodywork by Bayley outside Bayley's London premises thought to be going to Italy. The photo appeared in 'Motor Traction' dated 4th January 1906.

Who was Frederick George Pickering who set up the business in Tweedmouth?
Given the information supplied by Kevin, from Berwick Record Office, I was able to establish who he was. To do that I had to search genealogical sources. But that story begins earlier.

Starting with the very first research, I had to establish who Frederick George Pickering actually was. There was no information at all about him in Berwick – no electoral rolls, etc. – he was a total unknown. At that point one has to look at genealogical sources – something I would be using very much. The first place to look was at the censuses for 1901 and 1911. Surely if he was at Berwick between those dates then he should appear in one, or both, census. Yes, there was a Frederick George Pickering in both, but not in the Berwick area. He was found in London, married with a family and working as wheelwright. By 1911, he was listed as a Coach Motor Wheel Manufacturer. He had all the appearance of being able to do the job at Berwick – but there were still misgivings. If he was successful in 1901 in London and again in 1911 in London, how did he come to set up a failed business in Berwick in between those years? It didn't really gel but there was nobody I could find other than this London man. So I attributed the Berwick business to the London engineer.

Move along a year or two and Kevin appears with 'new' information from the 'Berwickshire News' - the announcement of a marriage at Tweedmouth Scotch Church between Frederick George Pickering, of Carlisle, son of George (deceased) and Christian Hope Tait, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. C.Tait, 84, Main Street, Tweedmouth on 13th April 1903. This was the first clue. So FGP was certainly not the London man I had thought at first.

But neither this Frederick nor George appeared on the 1901 census. I then looked back to the 1891 census. Both George Pickering, a blacksmith, and his son, Frederick, then aged 19, and an Engine Maker Apprentice, were living at Orchard Street, Carlisle. Where were they in 1901? George had died but Frederick was still missing.

From a newspaper report of 1906(above) it appears that FGP had worked for the firm of Tinklers, Penrith about 1894/1895. That firm is known to have had a garage on Victoria Road in the town.

I then had a look through all possible sources and found FGP, born 1873, listed on Chelsea Pensioners' service records 1760-1913. In turn that led to finding his having been attested at Carlisle in January 1901 as 20128 Trooper Frederick George Pickering, 102nd (Worcestershire) Company, 5th Battalion, Imperial Yeomanry. He did serve in South Africa during the Boer War being awarded the Queen's South Africa Medal with clasps for the areas in which he served. He was likely to have been back in England by the summer of 1902.

He was married in April 1903 and the business registered in January 1904. The couple had two children.

It is an amazing co-incidence that the two F.G. Pickerings were about the same age, both engineers and both were involved in their own design of vehicle wheels.

But what happened to FGP and his family after 1907?

Mrs. Pickering and their two children were still living in Main Street, Tweedmouth in the 1911 census helping with the grocery business. By now, Christopher Tait had died and his wife still had the business. How long it lasted is not known but since Mrs. Tait died in 1915 it is unlikely to have been continued after that. By 1921 the shop premises were occupied by a cabinet maker.

But what happened to FGP after the business folded in 1907? He does not appear on the 1911 census nor have I found any trace of him elsewhere – he just vanished! But there is one clue, feasible, but impossible to confirm. Here it is.

I found an F.G. Pickering, aged 42(the right age) on the passenger list of the steamer, 'Tunisia', which had sailed from Liverpool to Quebec, arriving there on 17.7.1914. He, and a couple of other passengers, were listed as having their destination as 'Farnham'.

Farnham is a small town in Ontario about forty miles east of Montreal. There were railway 'interests' there. One needs to look at the Canadian railways to see what they were. In 1883 was founded the Locomotive & Machine Co. Ltd of Montreal. In 1904 the company was purchased by the American Locomotive Co., (Alco) and, at a later date, was renamed Montreal Loco Works (MLW).

MLW had already acquired a large part of the Canadian steam loco market. Under the new ownership it became their design shop. In the period 1900-1915 railway expansion in Canada was unprecedented. Tariffs at the time discouraged Canadian railways from buying from USA.

The foregoing suggests that someone with the engineering expertise as had FGP was a potential recruit for the railway industry. Since he was not the only one with the destination 'Farnham', Alco may have been recruiting in the UK. We'll never know.

FGP may have had employment away from Berwick but his wife, Christian, had to remain there to help her widowed mother. They may have planned that FGP take work in Canada with the intention of the family moving when he had settled but that was disturbed by the outbreak of WW1 weeks after he sailed from Liverpool. So the family did not move and, by the end of WW1, they had drifted apart.

What did happen to his family? We know that Mrs. Tait died in 1915. Beyond that, very little. Mrs. Christian Pickering died at Nottingham in May 1933, 'formerly Nurse Companion, wife of Frederick George Pickering, occupation unknown'. Both of their family were living in Belper, Derbyshire by c.1930 and remained there.

I have some sympathy for FGP. He did build up a business – maybe too quickly – but he did have engineering expertise and, in some respects, he was before his time.

Fred Kennington
Hest Bank January 2020.