

## It's all in the name!

It all started with the stagecoaches. Before that the Mail coaches to and from Edinburgh en route to Berwick and beyond had to traverse the steep banks up and down into the Pease Dene and needed trace horses to help them. At that time the Post Office was at Press so they used what is now the Coldingham Moor road. By 1800, with Turnpike roads coming into general use and therefore a bit better maintenance, there came better 'coaches'. There was even a Surveyor of Mail Coaches, William Gibson, living in Woolmarket in Pigot's 1806 Directory. The first mail coach in the area left Edinburgh on 27/11/1786 for Dunbar, Press and Berwick, heading for London. It carried four passengers and had a 'well-armed' guard.

The best known of the coach builders was John Croall, born 1791, from Edinburgh. That name would continue in transport circles for very many years with Croall taxis in Edinburgh and Croall (later Croall, Bryson) in the Borders. John Croall travelled extensively supervising and demonstrating his coaches. He even went over to drive the first coach from Moscow to St. Petersburg!

In 1800 there were operating, the 'Royal Mail', the 'Royal Union', both through Berwick, the 'Royal Charlotte' via Coldstream and onward to Newcastle and London, and later, the 'Night Mail' and the 'Duke of Wellington' via Kelso, and the 'Chevy Chase' via Jedburgh.



1. The Edinburgh and London Royal Mail coach, 1838. The guard can be seen at the rear. Oil on canvas by John Frederick Herring, Snr. (1795—1865). The painting is in the collection of the Denver Art Museum, Berger Collection, Colorado, USA [via [Wikimedia Commons](#)].

These services didn't last long. The railway from Newcastle to London opened in 1837 hence the coaches only operated between Edinburgh and Newcastle. When the railway from Edinburgh reached Berwick in 1846 and from Newcastle in 1847, that was the end of stagecoaches along what is now the A1.

But it wasn't all comfort and convenience for passengers crossing the Border. Until Queen Victoria reluctantly wasted twelve minutes opening the Royal Border Bridge in 1850, passengers and luggage had to be decanted at either Berwick or Tweedmouth and taken by horse coach through the town to fight their way across the Old Bridge dodging other considerable horse-drawn vehicles and, sometimes, droves of cattle or sheep to reach the other station.

So much for the main road, but stagecoaches continued to run on local routes until branch railway lines opened with some until the 1890s. One that did survive late was the 'Cheviot' that left Wooler at 1100 on Saturdays, returning from Berwick at 1600 (before the 24-hour clock was introduced!) with a stop at Biteabout. Every Saturday the coach was accompanied by 'Lowick

Jimmy' (James Murray) who, in bare feet with boots tied together and slung round his neck, encouraged passengers to throw him coppers which went to improve the economics of the Berwick hostelryes.

Railways, too, gave their locos names from the start e.g 'Rocket'. All sorts of names were introduced. Around Berwick the North British Railway introduced their 'Scott' class D29/D30 in 1909. They had wonderful names 'Luckie Mucklebakkit', 'Cuddie Headrigg', 'Jingling Geordie' whose pockets jingled as he walked around Edinburgh, 'Wandering Willie'. Willie, and others, would have wandered into Berwick on local stopping trains or from St.Boswells. Going into Edinburgh the 'Scotts' could be seen simmering on the tracks of St.Margaret's Loco Shed.

Post 1923, after the grouping of railways that would see the LNER as the main operator, Berwick folk could see a plethora of famous trains – 'Mallard' and the other A4 streamliners were regular visitors and, perhaps the outstanding, was the 'Coronation' running from 1937. The naming of locos continued. One regular visitor was the unfortunate Gresley A3, 'Merry Hampton'. Leaning across the wall of Warkworth Terrace was a favoured spot for trainspotting – even then!

Many of the Classes D29/D30 survived the 1923 grouping – including 'Cuddie Headrigg', but none was included in Berwick's allocation of 27 locos. At the time, Tweedmouth had 44 locos allocated. How things changed, steam locos going the same way as stagecoaches!



2. Locomotive No. 4468 Mallard at the National Railway Museum in York. Mallard was a regular visitor to Berwick-upon-Tweed, on the London North Eastern Railway, post 1923. (Photo: PTG Dudva. CC BY-SA-3.0, via [Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:4468_Mallard.jpg)).

Around 1928 LNER introduced Sentinel steam railcars. Many, if not all, were named after stagecoaches. 'Royal Charlotte' was allocated to Tweedmouth Loco to operate stopping trains to Alnmouth/Alnwick and also up the Kelso branch. The name was an excellent choice! Small boys seeing this bus-like train crossing the Royal Border Bridge named it 'the Too-Too Bus'.

All of this brushed off on to buses in the 1920s. South of Berwick, in Northumberland, it didn't catch on too well but there are one or two interesting examples. Thompson Bros., who ran the first regular bus routes in the Berwick area, chose not to give their buses names – and not even to give them fleet numbers. One of the brothers, Robert, was also a cyclist who took part in the 1924 Olympic Games in Greece. On his return, the brothers gave their buses numbers from the Greek language: - Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta and Epsilon (sic). That arrangement was unique – but there is no record of which bus had which.

Moving south, Adam Archbold (Little Adam) was Harbourmaster at Craster. In addition, he had a small Ford bus with which he ran between Craster and Little Mill Station to connect with trains. That was the 'Ocean Maid'. Now Adam was also enterprising. A submarine had come ashore at Howick becoming a wreck. It was known that brassware had been on the vessel but some, or all, had vanished and suspicions were aroused. Now 'Ocean Maid' was a bad starter. One day Adam was having trouble and asked the local constabulary to help in giving it a push. They thought the bus was 'just a bit heavy' for its size, a look around it – there was the missing brass. I don't know what happened to Adam then! You can still find 'Little Adam's Cottage' if you visit Craster. A real character! Transport has always bred 'characters'.

If the naming of buses didn't take off too well in Northumberland, it certainly did across the Border. And the choice of names? Scott, naturally, appeared. The Amos Brothers, from Yarrow, whose buses would appear in Berwick in the 1920s after they had joined to become Brook & Amos, named their first bus in 1920 'The Flower of Yarrow'.

On the Scottish side, the idea of 'namings' took off. Most celebrated their history – or – geography with local mottos featuring connections with Common Ridings. A pity that nobody bothered to celebrate Berwick's Riding of the Bounds, no less important than the Common Ridings. Border Motor Transport had 'Border Queen' and 'Border Chief' – at least Spowart Bros. gave the latter name to one of the Spittal ferries. William Whitelaw from Yetholm had to have 'Gipsy Queen!' Moore from Jedburgh had 'Jedwater' and, also locally, Henderson had 'Jedforest'. On a different line Dave Welsh, from Morebattle, chose 'Lily of the Valley'. And what about the 'Wee Souter' from Selkirk?

But the best name has to be 'Midside Maggie'. For this you have to go back to 1643 when Margaret Lylestone, from Westruther, married Thomas Hardie and the couple had a croft at Tollishill up on the top of Soutra. It's just a wee bit bleak up there. The story is too long to detail here but it contains a snowball in June; gold coins baked in a bannock; the escape of the Earl of Lauderdale from the Tower of London; and a gold girdle, the latter now in an Edinburgh Museum.

'Midside Maggie' was emblazoned on the side of George Deans' charabanc. George ran a garage in Lauder in the 1920s. As well as other things, every Tuesday around 1926, George's daughter, Jessie, drove the bus on a day trip to Edinburgh. She used the day to go to the pictures, not available in Lauder then. No photo of 'Midside' has been located but one did appear in an exhibition at Lauder some years ago.

If you want to read more you can try, inter alia, 'Wilson's Tales of the Borders', but the writer used A. Thomson's book, 'Lauder and Lauderdale', originally published in 1902. You can find 'Wilson's Tales' if you look elsewhere in the website. It's worth a look!

Naming buses must have been good for trade. Perhaps hard to appreciate is that extended coach tours were running from the Borders earlier than you might think. Amos Bros (mentioned above) ran their first 2-day tour (dinner, bed & breakfast incl.) from Selkirk to the Lake District in 1921 for the local holidays. Fully loaded with passengers and luggage it was unable to take Kirkstone Pass and the passengers had to get out and walk part of the way! That didn't deter folk from travelling nor does it suggest there was something wrong with Amos Bros maintenance. The problem was that, ascending a steep hill, the fuel supply couldn't reach the engine. The problem was soon rectified when autovacs became available. In the following summers, extended tours were run once again, first with a 3-day tour to the Lake District and later, a 6-day tour to the Highlands. In 1925 they were offering a tour to Belgium to visit WW1 Battlefields. Another Gala operator, Adam Purves, did similar tours. Berwick didn't have anything of this nature. It didn't have the big local holidays that occurred in the Borders when the Mills closed so no scope for them plus Spittal was a destination for Border holiday makers itself.



3. A busy Spittal promenade pictured around 1900. Compared to today, the sand then was in parts nearly level with the promenade. From the early to mid-twentieth century Spittal used to be a popular holiday destination for workers from the Borders. © Kevin Graham.

Holiday Weeks had a range of day excursions, long and short, on offer – as far as Ullswater or Lochearnhead. These were long journeys. Silloth was popular destination for all the operators. Just imagine sitting in a charabanc going down the A7 at 12 mph, through Carlisle, then the winding road that takes for ever to get to Silloth – it still does! All that in a charabanc, chain-driven, lots of noise and petrol fumes. Years ago I spoke with an elderly lady from Denholm. She had made that trip when quite young. I asked her how she enjoyed it. Her reply, ‘ah wuz seik a’ the way there an’ a’ the way bawck’.

As I have already mentioned, busmen liked to celebrate the local history. Hawick, with the first and biggest of the Common Ridings, had to have a ‘Teribus’ somewhere – nothing to do with buses, of course. The name is lost in the distant past but it is generally thought to be ‘Teribus, ye Teri Odin’, meaning ‘Thor be with us, Thor and Odin’. Cairns & Welsh from Denholm used that name at some time. Even the LNER in 1934 named one of the locos used on the Waverley Route ‘Teribus’.

Galashiels has the Braw Lads Gathering which celebrates an event in 1337 when some English soldiers were found picking wild plums in a nearby orchard. They were duly routed. So Gala has the mottos ‘Braw Lads’ and ‘Sour Plums’.

Sometimes things go just a wee bit apley.

Adam Purves, from Gala, had a charabanc, LS 1037, that he christened ‘Braw Lads’. Now read what the ‘Berwick Advertiser’ reported on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1922: -

*‘A Fiat charabanc from Galashiels boasting the name ‘Sour Plums’ passed through Berwick on Tuesday. Whether the name represented the spirit of envy engendered in other road users on seeing the char-a-banc or the bored expression on the faces of its occupants is not clear, but anyhow the name appeared to tickle all who read it.’*

Not traced is the identity of the owner. I trust Brian Souter was a bit more circumspect when he founded ‘Stagecoach’!

Fred Kennington  
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