



Chaddesden Historical Group

Newsletter 71

February 2020

www.chaddesdenhistorygroup.co.uk/newsletters



Photo: Peter Barnes

The Oldest Post Box in Chaddesden

This is a wider view of the letter box at the junction of Chaddesden Lane and Church Lane that appeared on the front of the last newsletter.

The *Derby Evening Telegraph* of 4 December 1936 noted that Chaddesden Parish Council had requested a further letter-box in the village. Two months later, on 5 February 1937, the newspaper reported that the Head Postmaster had now authorised the "provision of an additional letter-box at a point near Church-lane".

Clearly the Church Lane wall box must have been installed in 1937, however, it bears the plain royal cipher "GR" which is that of King George V who died in January 1936, rather than "G-VI-R", the cipher used by his successor King George VI, demonstrating that, very sensibly, the Post Office used up its stock of old boxes before issuing new ones. Working boxes are sometimes refurbished and retained for future operational use but not necessarily in their original positions; this of course means the royal cipher on a post box is not always an infallible indication as to when a box was first installed in that particular location.

The Church Lane box carries the name of its manufacturer, W. T. Allen. As an indication of the historical importance of this piece of street furniture it has an entry in the City of Derby's Local List of important buildings and structures.

Please turn the page to read a more detailed article on Chaddesden Post Boxes by Peter Cholerton.



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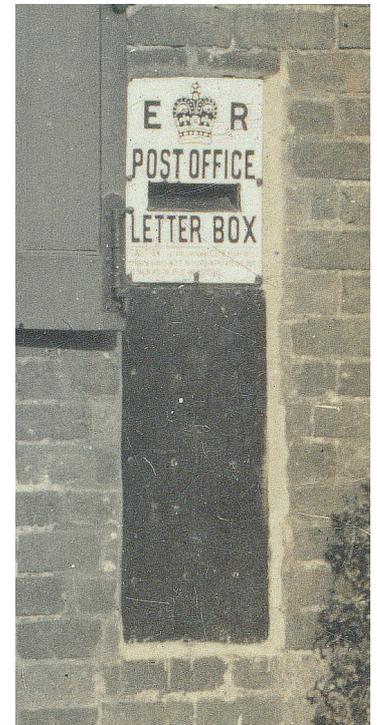
Chaddesden Post Boxes

The introduction of the standard Penny Post in 1840 quickly brought with it something of a logistical problem. Once you had affixed the penny stamp to the letter, how did you get your mail into the postal system? This was fairly easy to do if you lived in Derby, which then had a large Post Office in the Corn Market, but what about people living in outlying village communities? The answer was the Receiving Office ... essentially just someone's ordinary house that acted as a place where you could leave your letters for onward transmission. With the passage of time, Receiving Offices became Post Offices offering a wider range of services, but as many people still lived at some considerable distance from a Post Office or couldn't get to it during opening hours an alternative method of posting letters was put forward by Anthony Trollope, the novelist, who proposed the use of cast-iron roadside boxes. After a trial in the Channel Islands, the new post boxes were gradually introduced to the British mainland from 1853 onwards.

This early example of a Chaddesden wall box displaying the royal cipher comprised of a crown and the initials "ER" dates from the reign of King Edward VII (1901–1910) and was photographed c.1916 built into the wall of Chaddesden Post Office (opposite the Wilmot Arms), when the business was run by my great-grandparents, George and Louisa Mountney. It replaced an earlier example with no royal cipher whatsoever. Incidentally, the wording underneath the aperture cautions the public not to post letters containing money or valuables in the box, but to use registered mail instead.

Today, of course, post boxes are a very familiar part of our street furniture and with some 115,000 of them it is said that more than 98% of the UK population have a Royal Mail post box within half a mile of their address. They come in several different types, for example, wall boxes like the one in Church Lane featured on the front page, larger pillar boxes such as those at Oakwood shopping centre and Nottingham Road (opposite Chaddesden Lane End), and the much smaller (and cheaper to make) lamp boxes, which as their name suggests were originally designed to be attached to lamp posts, but may also be found on metal pedestals or even built into walls.

Various contractors have been involved in the production of post boxes since the mid-nineteenth century, including W. T. Allen (London); James Maude & Co (Mansfield, who actually made the boxes under contract for W. T. Allen); Carron (Falkirk); Cochrane (Dudley); and Andrew Handyside & Co (Derby). Sometimes it is possible to read the name of the foundry on the box provided it has not been overpainted too often.



Chaddesden Post Boxes continued



The display plate on post boxes which gives the collection time also formerly used to show the name of the box's location too. Occasionally, this could sometimes cause a degree of confusion, for example there is only one box on Chaddesden Park Road (pictured on left), yet it went by the name of York Road. Nowadays the location has been dropped and all that the display plate shows is the post box number, in this case DE21 581, which enables the postman emptying the box to find the correct key amongst the many on his bunch.

As Chaddesden began its rapid expansion, the Parish Council frequently wrote to the Head Postmaster at Derby requesting the provision of additional post boxes. Details of these applications may be found amongst the minutes of the Parish Council meetings now kept at the Derbyshire Record Office in Matlock, or occasionally in the pages of the local press as shown by the reports in the *Derby Evening Telegraph* of 4 December 1936 and 5 February 1937 mentioned on the front page.

Another interesting little post box is the one on Highfield Lane, opposite the end of Ashworth Avenue (pictured below). A lamp box has been here since before the Second World War but today's example on its metal pole dates from after 1994, for the wording above the aperture at the top reads "Royal Mail" not "Post Office", the name change being occasioned by the split between the letters business (Royal Mail Letters) and the retail business (Post Office Counters). Underneath the plate listing the collection time is the name of the manufacturers, Machan of Scotland, who operated from premises in Falkirk until the business closed in 2015.

Anyone wishing to learn more about the history and various types of post boxes has plenty of information available via the Internet, especially the websites of the Postal Museum and the Letter Box Study Group, whose details are given below.

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Useful websites dealing with post boxes:

<https://www.postalmuseum.org/discover/collections/letter-boxes>

<http://lmsg.org/about-boxes>



Water Supply In Chaddesden

Water – we take it so much for granted, don't we? This fact was brought home to me back in April 2019 when early one morning I turned the kitchen tap on and only a trickle of water came out. It transpired that a major water-main burst in Derby had left whole areas of the city virtually dry; fortunately, repairs were speedily made and, for me at least, the water was back on only a few hours later. This event prompted me to think about how Chaddesden people managed for a water supply in years gone by, long before mains water was laid on in the 1920s.

We can imagine that the people who first created their small community here saw that Chaddesden Brook would be capable of meeting their basic needs. As time progressed, these early settlers would naturally look for further supplies of water, such as springs on sloping areas of ground where an impermeable layer (clay, for example) would stop the downward progression of rainwater. With the gradual passage of time more springs would be located and wells dug, and as the population of the village gradually increased the availability of water would be a limiting factor in the provision of new properties. If your land did not have access to water then there would be little point in building a new house.

The early editions of the Ordnance Survey's 25-inch maps show the locations of many wells and pumps in Chaddesden, these are marked by a tiny circle and the letter "W" or "P" respectively. Early wells were sometimes excavated with a bottle profile, i.e. they were wider at the bottom than at the top, but the wells most likely to be encountered are of a cylindrical shape, with a minimum diameter of around three feet. Practical considerations mean that it would be extremely difficult to excavate a well with a diameter less than this ... try marking out a three-foot diameter circle and then imagine yourself at the bottom of, say, a twenty-foot-deep well-shaft trying to dig away at the soil below you! The first consideration involved in excavating a new well was deciding exactly where to dig. One idea might be to look at nearby properties; if they all had viable wells in their gardens, then it was probably quite likely that a new well in a somewhat similar spot in your own garden would prove to be equally productive. Incidentally, it was considered to be "bad form" to dig a new well too near an existing well as this might deplete the original well's supply; in general it was said that a new well should lie outside a circle centred upon an existing well whose radius was equal to the depth of that well.

Once the site had been decided upon, the well-digger, armed with little more than a spade, a plumb-bob, a bucket, and a labourer to operate a windlass, could begin his work. In Chaddesden's clayey soil, the process used to involve the construction of a circular wooden collar or curb of the required diameter which was frequently shod or reinforced with iron; next the ground was excavated to the depth of perhaps one foot, the collar placed at the bottom and the first course of brickwork "steining", or well-lining, placed on the collar. Now the real work began, the well-digger stood inside the hole and excavated underneath the collar until it, and the bricks it supported, dropped a few inches enabling the second course of bricks to be placed on top of the first course. Slowly and laboriously this process was repeated over and over again as the well-digger and the brick steining gradually descended into the earth. If hard ground was encountered the steining could be discontinued otherwise it would extend right to the bottom of the shaft. Hopefully, at the end of three or four days' hard work there would be a plentiful supply of water at the bottom of the well.

Shortly after acquiring their late-1930s property in Field Lane, Ken and Margaret Poyser noticed a slight depression in the garden which I half-jokingly suggested might just be an old well. In his spare time Ken Poyser began to excavate the site, and about 18 inches down he found the unmistakable signs of brick lining – it was indeed a well. The brickwork was neatly laid so Ken decided to continue his work and by the summer of 2009 he had dug down 11 feet. The quantity of old plastic washing-up bottles, beer bottles, domestic pottery, etc., he unearthed demonstrated that when the well had finished its useful life it had been filled up with household rubbish.

Eventually, after many more months of arduous work Ken at last stopped when he was at a depth of 21 feet; although the floor of the old well was quite damp, he had still not reached the bottom! By pushing a metal rod further into the mud, Ken was able to verify that the brick lining continued on down for at least a few more courses below this point. In this particular case there is a puzzle concerning the need for a well in the garden of a property in Field Lane which would have had a mains supply right from the outset.



Water Supply in Chaddesden continued

Since Ken and Margaret have also dug up countless fragments of old clay tobacco pipes which may be indicative of a site once frequented by workmen of a bygone era, they wonder if the well might have provided water for the old brickyard, whose site is now lost, but which is thought to have been situated somewhere in the immediate vicinity. By adding a decorative well-head and canopy, Ken and Margaret now have an attractive feature to enhance their garden, as shown in the photo, though few visitors realise they are looking at a genuine well.



The Derby Mercury newspaper of 25 April 1924 carried an account of a special parish meeting held at Chaddesden School to discuss the possibility of having piped water laid on to the village. More than one hundred ratepayers attended, and heard the surveyor's estimate of 15 shillings per yard for connecting to the Nottingham Road main. If the pipes were laid some 2½ miles through the whole village, the total cost would be over £2,500. The meeting was told that although a Government subsidy could be obtained if the work commenced immediately, there would still be a large increase on the rates for years to come. As can be imagined, a discussion followed and it was noted that although no-one would be compelled to have piped water connected to their property, the costs of the project would nonetheless be levied on all ratepayers. This did not please various householders who vociferously complained that they had only recently paid as much as £60 to have a well sunk, and could not therefore agree to the additional further expense of having "town water" supplied. Eventually it was proposed that the question be postponed for a number of years, and although many people abstained from voting, the resolution was still carried by 26 votes for, and 6 against.

I found the reactions of these ratepayers in 1924 fascinating – given the option of a new supply of clean, piped water at an additional cost or continuing to use their own wells, they chose the wells!

If you had walked up Church Lane in the early years of the twentieth century, you would have seen the parish pump in its own small enclosure, fenced off from the other properties and accessed through a gate on the north side of the lane. At busy times of the day, anyone wishing to use the pump would have to stand for some minutes in a queue of other local residents, all waiting in turn to fill their buckets. When the pump broke down around the time of the First World War, there was considerable argument over the liability for its repair; in the end nothing was done and the pump ceased to be recorded after about 1930.

Almost as if to demonstrate the fickle nature of public opinion, the Derby Daily Telegraph of 4 September 1928 noted that property owners at Chaddesden were now in favour of a public water supply and Shardlow RDC therefore resolved to approach the Derby Corporation, with a view to the extension of its mains. Derby Town Council were the owners of the biggest waterworks in the area, having purchased the privately-owned Derby Waterworks Company for £351,000 in 1880, and from the 1920s onwards it became an important selling point for anyone marketing a Chaddesden property to note that "Town water is now laid on."

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This article is abridged from a more detailed article on the Chaddesden Historical Group's web site at

www.chaddesdenhistorygroup.co.uk/single-post/2019/10/26/Water-Supply-In-Chaddesden



End of the Road for

yourbus

by Peter Barnes



Previous issues of this newsletter have contained “End of the Road” articles on the Felix Bus Service ([Newsletter 30, April 2012](#)) and Notts and Derby route 11 ([Newsletter 66, November 2018](#)). Those were minor changes, affecting just one bus an hour and very different from the events of October 2019 when Dunn Motor Traction Ltd, trading as Yourbus, ceased operations, Chaddesden lost a third of its buses and the main route to Oakwood was halved in frequency.

It did not help that off-peak bus services in Chaddesden were in disarray at the time while Nottingham Road was closed for resurfacing. Buses were diverted on roads that are not normally bus routes and inadequate for the extra traffic. The diversionary routes changed from week to week as the road works progressed. There were reports of drivers taking short cuts along estate roads when they had lost the diversion. No information was provided for passengers who were faced with long waits for buses that arrived full with passengers standing.

Dunn Motor Traction Limited

Let us take a look at the bus company that gave Chaddesden, for a few years, a “really good bus service” to paraphrase the slogan of one of the competitors.

Dunn Motor Traction Ltd was registered at Companies House on 30 January 2009 with Robert Anthony Dunn and Anthony Scott Dunn as directors. The company began operating routes from Nottingham to Bulwell and Hempshill Vale from a depot in Hucknall. When the contract for Derbyshire County Council tendered routes 140/141/142 (Matlock/Ripley/Alfreton) came due for renewal, Yourbus won the contract. They also won contracts for Nottinghamshire County Council tendered routes and began operating one route in competition with Nottingham City Transport.

Within a year or two of starting operations, the company leased land at Heanor Gate Road, Heanor Gate Industrial Estate, where a new workshop and office was built.

In 2011 and 2012 the company won contracts to operate services on behalf of National Express. The National Express fleet grew to 55 coaches but there were problems with breakdowns and the contract was terminated in 2015, allegedly due to breaches of contract.

Citylink, Y1, Y3 and Y5

Yourbus first service in Derby was the Citylink express which competed with Trent Barton's Red Arrow to Nottingham. It was short lived, ending after Trent Barton increased the Red Arrow service frequency from every 15 minutes to the present 10 minute interval.

In 2015 Yourbus was back with three new routes into Derby. Y1 competed with Trent Barton's H1 to Heanor; Y3 competed with the Ilkeston Flyer and extended to Cotmanhay; Y5 followed the same route as Trent Barton Indigo to Nottingham via Long Eaton and Beeston. For the first time since Trent and Barton merged, Chaddesden travellers had a choice of operator to Nottingham. All three routes were timed to depart 5 minutes ahead of the Trent Barton bus in the hope of picking up passengers who would board the first bus that came along. Thus two Derby – Nottingham buses ran 5 minutes apart through Chaddesden, then there was a 15 minute gap before the next two. Delays in traffic on journeys from Nottingham regularly resulted in the Indigo catching up with the Y5 and the two “leapfrogging” as they passed through Chaddesden. ➤



◀ The original all-over maroon colour scheme on a Y3 at Wharnccliffe Road, Ilkeston on 4 August 2016. Later buses were painted mainly white with maroon and grey bands as seen in the two title pictures. Drivers' uniforms were maroon and grey.
[photo: Peter Barnes]

Derby 20 and 26

Arriva having reduced the service from every 10 minutes to 15 minutes on the Chaddesden (20) and Oakwood (26) routes, left room for Yourbus to operate in competition from November 2016. Buses did one journey on route 20 and then one on route 26 in the same way as Arriva buses. The combined service with a 7-8 minute interval on both routes gave a best ever service except for passengers with operator-specific tickets.

When the Derbyshire County Council contract for route 11 to Ilkeston came due for renewal, Yourbus won that from existing operator Notts & Derby. The contract required the provision of 3 evening journeys and 4 Sunday buses through Chaddesden and Oakwood via Morley Road.

Yourbus final expansion in Derby was in competition with Arriva on route 1 to Alvaston from 2017. Problems were beginning to arise. The company last reported a profit, of £1.635million, in 2015-16. A loss of £1.97M was made in the period March 2017 – June 2018.

Even so, it came as a surprise when the company ceased trading and this message was all there was to be seen on their web site, www.catchyourbus.co.uk:

**It is with regret to inform our passengers that Yourbus has ceased trading as of 04/10/2019.
We would like to thank our customers for their support and custom over the years.
Any updates regarding genie card passengers will be released in due course.**

That morning's school contracts were the last to be fulfilled, leaving head teachers the problem of how to return children home. Prompt work by the Public Transport Unit of Derbyshire County Council ensured that return transport was provided and that replacements for all Yourbus tendered services were in place for the following week. Service 11 was divided between Littles (weekday evenings) and Hulley's (Sundays) but only until 29 February 2020. There will be no evening or Sunday buses on Morley Road after that date.

Derby City Council's response was less impressive. The best that council leader Chris Poulter could manage was, "For us, there will inevitably be a loss of income from the fact that the company had a stand in Derby bus station." Actually, the company was a major user, from seven bays in the bus station, but you would need to use the bus station to know that. There was no mention of the inconvenience to Chaddesden and Oakwood passengers who had lost a significant part of their bus service. A "Your Bus Announcement" later appeared on the council's web site but it had so many errors and omissions that it is only mentioned here as a warning not to believe all that you read on the Internet.



What was the reason for Yourbus going out of business? Nothing to do with losses caused by diversions to avoid the Nottingham Road resurfacing, but an expensive law firm. The company was in dispute with Derbyshire County Council over payments for concessionary bus travel although receiving around £110,000 a month to pay for journeys made by bus pass holders. There was also a long running dispute with National Express in which the company was represented by Fieldfisher LLP and incurred significant costs. As a result of non-payment of fees amounting to £580,000, Fieldfisher petitioned for the company to be wound up and then moved on to milk another corporate client.

References

Wikipedia page for Yourbus at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yourbus>

Derbyshire County Council bus timetables for Mid and South Derbyshire, various editions

Companies House entries for company no 06806098 at <https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/06806098>



Sussex Circus Co-op and Post Office

The last newsletter contained a photo of a feature which is very prominent on the roof of Sussex Circus Co-op. How could anyone miss it?

The sale of approximately 1,000 square yards of land on the Roe Farm Estate to the Derby Co-operative Society Ltd at 10 shillings a [square] yard as a site for shops was agreed, after a long debate on the provision of shops on council housing estates, by Derby Town Council at their meeting on 7 July 1937.

Some councillors opposed selling the land and suggested that it should be leased to the Co-op. Another asked if land would be available to other traders at the same price. It was stated that the same price applied to all land sold to traders but that the land had not actually been offered on general sale.

Curiously, nobody noticed the sale price equivalent to over £2,000 an acre was a considerable increase on the £95 an acre paid for the Roe Farm site only seven years earlier. On top of that, the Co-op would have to pay for the cost of construction and it is likely that their design would have to meet with the approval of Charles Aslin, the Borough Architect. During the meeting, reference was made to Mr Aslin's report on shops erected on the Austin Estate and his recommendation that something should be done to prevent shops of that character being erected elsewhere.

The drawings for the proposed shop at Sussex Circus, dated January 1938, the first building in the district centre for the Roe Farm Estate, would certainly please Mr Aslin. The 86 foot (26 metre) frontage is concave to match the curvature of the road. The walls at each end are at angles to follow the lines of Berkshire Street and Norwich Street. In order to reduce the height of the roof, it has a W-shaped profile with a valley in the middle, although that is not apparent from the road. It is best appreciated when viewed from the Berkshire Street end when the roof feature, which is the outlet from the ventilation system, can be seen towards the front of the building and not in the middle as would be expected with a single ridge roof. The roof has steel frame, built by D. Chattaway & Son Ltd., constructional engineers of Derby. It is supported on brick columns between the front windows and at the back, leaving an uncluttered interior without supporting walls or columns. This is a remarkable pre-war public building, on a par with the two cinemas and the art-deco public house yet it is completely ignored.

Not only was Sussex Circus Co-op the only building on the pre-war estate not owned by Derby Town Council, it was the only shop, serving a large number of Co-operative Society members on the Roe Farm Estate. Initially there was a grocery department at the Norwich Street end and a butchery department, with a cold store, at the Berkshire Street end where the Post Office is now.

The central part of the building was a warehouse but part was converted into a fish and fruit department (strange combination!) in 1948. A breeze block wall between the grocery and the warehouse was eventually demolished and the interior re-arranged to give the modern self-service shop that we have today.

Peter Barnes