

T.C.P. Rides Again

It appears that Mr. S— was popular; I assure you he was. I wonder what he's doing now? In those long-past, happy, pre-war days in Selsdon there was a camaraderie among those who travelled regularly by Green Line to and from London.

Can anyone remember that cheerful schoolmaster Mr. C— who entertained us with his dry wit for half an hour from Sanderstead until the coach slowed down sufficiently for him to be catapulted through the gates of the (now) Brixton College of Education? Incidentally, he finished his career as lecturer in Mathematics at the (then) Borough Polytechnic. Of course, we had the odd character who shared our journey on occasion. After stopping at Arkwright Road, a trilby hat would appear in the doorway followed by a violin-case clasped by a solemn faced individual. He would glare down the gangway with an expression that could only be interpreted as disgust; he had the look on his face as if to say, "One word out of you lot and I'll play the thing!" Of course, he may have carried his sandwiches in the case; he never spoke, so we shall never know.

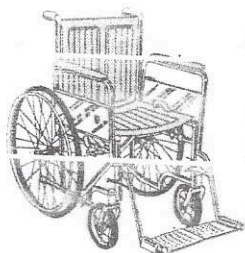
And what of conductor Freddy F—, a character if ever there was—who often kept us in fits of laughter. He instituted his own fare on occasion late at night, 6d. from the Swan to Selsdon. I believe the minimum fare was then 1s. 3d. Freddy left little to the imagination as to where the tanners went! I think the Company caught up with him at last: he was translated to another area where his style was more cramped.

What of the drivers? They were a sporty lot. We knew all of them by name and although most of their names have now sunk into oblivion, one or two are still remembered. They shared the fun of travelling—poor wages but rich in spirit!

I lived for a time at Sanderstead. There was a hedge in the Limpsfield Road, where the fire station now stands, with a neat gap in it through which dwellers in Lime Meadow and Sanderstead Court Avenues—and few there were then in the 1930's—crossed the field to cut off a corner. Part of our mutual fun was to time the retarding of the coach and jump off so that one was shot through the hole in the hedge. It was an exercise which improved, of course, with practice.

Approaching Thornton Heath one day we were passing the Pond when a very pretty blonde crossed the road some way in front of us. The controller of our destiny was so intent on following her with his eyes that he did not observe a small car waiting to turn right into the Croydon by-pass. Although braking hard he failed to prevent the crash which followed, lifting the car off the road. Fortunately, no one was hurt, including the driver; but was his face red!

But our 'star' driver was undoubtedly Ernie H—. He was a real Jehu, and a ride home with him was an experience we all



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enjoyed. Alas, he wouldn't be able to do it now with roads choked as they are. He discovered that if he pressed his self-starter under certain conditions he could make his engine back-fire. He had a wicked streak in his make-up. Crossing the road one day was a man with a bag overloaded with, I think, oranges. Correct timing of the "back-fire" and down went the bag in the road, the oranges spreading in all directions. His favourite victims were dogs—and you know how dogs respond to fireworks, whilst a man cleaning out the tramlines one day, thought he had committed a short circuit to Eternity. The funniest incident occurred while we were passing the Croham Hurst golf-course. Enjoying a quiet game on a summer evening was a golfer "teed" up for the drive. Ernie pressed the button at the psychological moment—and bang! The bus went on, the turf flew up and the ball careered down the Upper Selsdon Road.

Alas, the last time I saw Ernie, he was a very solemn-faced inspector at West Croydon. Ah well, change and decay!

Recently I had the pleasure of renewing contact with a former friend and witness of many hilarious incidents which occurred during our daily journeys. This same Mr. R— reminded me of the time he missed the coach at Sanderstead Church and running down Sanderstead Hill and Carlton Road caught it at Selsdon Road Station! They laid him out on the floor of the coach to recover. No, it was not only Mr. S— who was a little mad!